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ABSTRACT

This report describes the adult basic education profession in Australia across state boundaries and across a wide range of contexts. Chapter 1 discusses competencies and professions and why competency-based teacher education has been unsuccessful. Chapter 2 discusses the context of Adult Basic Education Competencies. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology that led to development of the competency descriptors: three functional analysis workshops with practitioners, group and individual critical incidents interviews, observations of and interviews with 29 teachers, examination of documents, and review of information from other projects. Chapter 4 outlines the competency descriptions. Competencies are divided into seven units, each consisting of two to four elements with related performance criteria and cues (examples). The units are as follows: adult learning and teaching approaches and practices; selection and placement of students; managing learning situations; monitoring learning; evaluation of programs; community communication and consultation; and professional development and training. Chapter 5 describes how each element was validated using data in the critical incidents, observations, and interviews. Appendixes contain competency standards information, and critical incident interview and observation/interview questions and data. (Contains 51 references.) (YLB)

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FINAL REPORT 1993

ED 406 584

# *The Adult Basic Education Profession and Competence: Promoting Best Practice*

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## FOREWORD

There is no shortage of commentary about the difficulty, some would say impossibility, of describing 'teachers' work'. Yet, the narrowness of the government driven descriptions of beginning teacher competencies devised in the UK provide clear evidence that control of teachers' work and of the articulation of that work must be seen as part of a wider political struggle around the reform of education and training. It has to involve teachers.

The work of establishing competency standards for beginning teachers in Australia is now well under way, initially as part of the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning and now under the auspices of the newly formed Australian Teaching Council. A useful review of this work is in *Unicorn*, Vol. 19, No 3, September 1993.

*What is a Competent ABE Teacher?* is important because it differs in a number of important respects from other competency development work in the professions. First, the focus is not on beginning teachers but on experienced teachers in ABE. Second, the project was commissioned following suggestions from a professional association, the Australian Council for Adult Literacy, and the field—it was not foist upon it. Third, the competencies are written for the profession and not for the National Training Board's purposes, although they have been reported largely within the NTB template.

These are important differences in that they reflect some of the complexities that revolve around the politics of developing competency standards for a profession such as teaching. (After all, it wasn't so long ago that it was referred to as a calling!)

The usefulness and relevance of this project has already been demonstrated in a number of ways through the application of earlier draft versions to, for example, the development of professional development strategies and the redesign of teacher education programs.

However, useful and revealing as *What is a Competent ABE Teacher?* will be, we must remember that this is a historical document. It records the competencies that ABE teachers demonstrated and valued at what may be referred to as the 'emerging' phase of this profession. It is important that the competencies articulated in this report are revisited and revised regularly as the profession develops, extends and consolidates its base of professional expertise.

Rosie Wickert

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# Chapter 1
# Introduction

## 1.1
## Aims of the Project

The original title of this project was 'What is a competent Adult Basic Education teacher?' - a working title kept throughout the life of the project up until the final report. During the data collection phases and various presentations of work-to-date, practitioners often queried the title, stating that it was too focused on the individual, too threatening and that it incorporated notions of deficit. As can be seen, the final report bears a new title which shifts the focus to the profession. It is interesting (though not surprising) that the concerns about the title highlight some key issues in the Adult Basic Education profession.

A first concern focused on the very title that teachers prefer: Adult Basic Education (ABE) or Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE). For the purpose of the project, ABE has been taken as a generic term for adult literacy and numeracy teaching. The parameters of ABE, for example, the inclusion of science or technology, remains an issue unresolved by the project.

In this report we have attempted to describe the profession in a useful, coherent way across state boundaries and across a wide range of contexts. It is important to realise that this document is the culmination of eighteen months of research involving hundreds of practitioners from all states and territories in Australia. Even though there will undoubtedly be comment regarding omissions, inclusions, emphases and definitions, this report represents a starting point in articulating what it is that constitutes and explains good practice. (It will be seen that there are no specific competencies spelling out EEO principles as these are integral to functioning as an Adult Basic Education teacher and therefore constitute part of many of the performance criteria.) As such, it is not a definitive series of statements but rather a working document which should provide a basis for further refinement as well as a basis for developing competency descriptions for particular contexts of Adult Basic Education practice.

**These competency standards for ABE teachers are in some ways significantly different from the standards currently being developed for the professions in general and the teaching profession in particular. Whereas those standards are aimed at the beginning teacher or practitioner, these are aimed at the 'good' practitioner with a number of years of experience. The principal aim of the project is to map good practice and use this as a benchmark which will guide continuing professional development and initial teacher education courses.**

The potential benefits of the project to the profession are numerous and include:

- Raising morale by articulating more clearly the range and variety of things that ABE practitioners do well

- Aiding the development of career paths
- Targeting gaps in professional development
- Providing a starting point for developing more specific competencies for specific contexts
- Providing support to lobby for professional development funding

The major audience for this report, then, is the field itself. Nevertheless, it is significant that the profession is able to describe its practices in ways which are acceptable and understandable to the profession itself **and** to those outside the profession, including funding bodies, governments and institutions.

Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of competencies and the professions including a brief summary of why competency-based teacher education has so far been fairly unsuccessful. Appendix A enlarges on this area. Chapter 2 discusses the context of Adult Basic Education Competencies.

The development of competency standards for an industry or occupation requires that a range of methods be employed so as to maximise the validity and reliability of the competency standards. (For discussion of these issues see Gonczi, Hager and Oliver, 1990.)

Chapter 3 describes the Research Methodology, a combination of classroom research, interviews, expert workshops and content analysis which has led to the development of the competency descriptors.

Chapter 4 outlines the competency descriptions themselves. Chapter 5 gives more details of the data on which the competencies were based, and Appendices C, D, E and F provide further data.

We hope that this project contributes to the further development of the profession and we would like to thank again all those people who contributed to the discussions, workshops, presentations, observations and interviews and those who allowed us to quote their experiences and ideas more fully in the report.

## 1.2 Competency Analysis and the Professions

Many professions in Australia are well down the path of adopting competency-based standards. These include pharmacy, nursing, architecture, accountancy, engineering, dietetics, occupational therapy, veterinary science, physiotherapy and various others.

Recent policy developments at both the international (GATT) and national levels (Special State Premiers' Conference on qualifications recognition) will encourage other professions to do the same. GATT's major agenda for the 1990s is to free up the trade in professional services, so as to enable qualified competent professionals to practise worldwide. In Australia similar moves are occurring, including the initiatives by the States to institute uniform recognition of qualifications and competency standards nationwide.

Of course, the fact that other professions are engaged in adopting competency standards is not of itself sufficient reason for teaching in general, or Adult Basic Education teaching in particular, to do so. There are, however, significant advantages in adopting competency standards. These include:

- Maintenance of professional standards.
  Competency standards provide explicit statements of what people need to be able to do to practise successfully as professionals. Both entry to and progress within the profession are able to be based on more objective and valid criteria than currently exist. This can raise morale within the profession as well as enhance its standing in the community.
- Basis for professional development.
  In addition to helping universities plan initial teacher education courses, competency standards will aid a profession in planning continuing education courses and professional development, and individuals in planning their career paths.

Whether the suggested benefits actually occur, however, will depend on the way professional competence is conceptualised.

Historically, the competency movement has close ties with the more general behaviourist movement which influenced education in the 1960s and 70s. This influence is still strong in the competency-based analyses of trades and middle level occupations which are characterised by a desire to develop lists of tasks and sub-tasks which can be measured by the use of a checklist.

Whether this approach is valid for the trades is an arguable point but it is clearly not suitable for teaching. It is based on the premise that there is a standard or 'best way' of performing tasks or roles. Teaching, by contrast, is distinguished by its complexity and by legitimate differences of opinion about both its aims and what constitutes appropriate practice.

A second way of looking at professional competence is in terms of the general attributes of the practitioner that are crucial to the effective performance of professional tasks. In doing so, this

approach highlights the higher level competencies neglected by the first approach, things such as problem solving, communication and so on. The weakness of this approach is that it neglects the context in which these competencies are applied. A general problem solving capacity, as measured by a critical thinking test, for example, might say little about how well teachers solve the problems faced in their work.

A third approach seeks to integrate the best of the two previous approaches. The aim is to identify areas of professional practice in which it is essential to demonstrate competence and then to analyse these in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed by the practitioner. This approach provides a balance between specific and higher level competencies and enables a valid and cost effective assessment procedure to be developed. It is particularly useful for professional development since it is amenable to the setting of different levels of competence in performing the same tasks and roles.

For a more detailed description of the competency movement at all occupational levels see Appendix A.

## 1.3 The Failure of Competency-Based Teacher Education (CBTE)

The first approach to conceptualising professional competence (discussed above), inspired by behaviourism, viewed a profession as a series of discrete, immediately observable tasks. It was found to have serious limitations. That such an approach is totally inappropriate for professions like teaching is evidenced by the repeated failure in the USA this century of attempts to define it as a long series of technical tasks. The best known of these was CBTE. The failure of CBTE has been widely documented eg Short, 1984; Haney et al, 1987; Simons and Elliott, 1989. Major weaknesses included the assumption that all teachers would carry out a given task in the same way. In practice, there is usually a variety of ways to carry out the task satisfactorily. Also, by concentrating on discrete pieces of knowledge and skill, CBTE only dealt with fairly superficial aspects of teaching, while ignoring the holistic way in which such knowledge and skills are integrated and co-ordinated in actual professional teaching practice. Overall, competence in teaching is concerned with what Walker (1992) has called the application of "intelligent skill knowledge" ie the capacity to act intelligently and ethically in the variety of situations in which teachers find themselves.

Since this project began, a national project to develop competency standards for school teachers as well as numerous local projects for specific teaching areas, including ESOL, have begun. A project for TAFE teacher competencies has also commenced. Presumably these ABE standards will be in some way complementary to those being currently developed for TAFE, but as we have no first-hand knowledge of the methodology or conceptual framework being used for that project, this a hope rather than an expectation. It is unfortunate, but probably inevitable given the various interests and funding mechanisms, that a number of similar projects are developing simultaneously but without reference to each other.

# Chapter 2
# The Context of the Adult Basic Education Teacher Competencies

One of the things that has worried many Australians about the competency movement as outlined in chapter 1 of this report is that it often appears to be highly reductionist and mechanistic. This concern has been reinforced for those of us working in education by the development of lists of hundreds or even thousands of competencies for teachers. Even though the majority of this research was carried out in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, a similar taste for lengthy lists of discrete 'competencies' is evident in some quarters in Australia. However, the approach developed by Hager and Gonczi for analysing the professions, and adopted for this project, has been accepted as both useful and valid. It firmly rejects any notion of lengthy checklists of 'competencies'.

## 2.1 What Can Competencies Describe?

There has been a general feeling throughout the teaching profession that it is impossible to develop a set of competencies which would capture all that teachers do. This notion has influenced Adult Basic Education practitioners and was strongly expressed during the research phases of this report.

It is acknowledged that it may not be possible to describe everything. The attempts to do just this could be what led to long lists of discrete tasks in previous studies of teacher competencies, lists which indeed still seem to dominate the writing of some competency documents. Rather, this project has sought to describe competencies within the Adult Basic Education profession more holistically. A basic principle of working in this field is that discrete tasks, or any sum of them, will only ever describe the profession superficially. (This should be, perhaps, a basic principle for any job description). To this end, the actual competency statements contained in chapter 4 may appear somewhat brief, especially when compared to the ALBSU Standards for Basic Skills Teachers in England. However, these performance criteria have been formulated trying to draw together the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and attributes relevant to a particular element. These statements have deliberately not been separated out into more discrete points as it was felt that the sense of an integrated whole would have been lost. Having said that, it is true that any division into competency areas and then into elements of competency will always be to some extent an artificial one and there will always be overlap. This should not be a major concern if there are not too many further breakdowns giving a false sense of moving from competency 1, element 1, performance criteria point 3 to point 4 and so on!

## 2.2 Teacher / Practitioner Roles

While carrying out the research for this project it soon became clear that 'teacher' was not an adequate descriptor for Adult Basic Education workers. The majority of people interviewed and observed, and all the workshop participants, believed the roles of Adult Basic Education workers stretched well beyond a classroom or other learning/teaching contexts.

In this report 'practitioner' has been used interchangeably with 'teacher' to emphasise that teachers of Adult Basic Education will also often be co-ordinators, managers, administrators, trainers (of volunteers), curriculum developers, evaluators, advocates, staff development presenters ..... and the list goes on. There was general consensus that the profession required a competent Adult Basic Education teacher to have the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes to work across these domains.

The question inevitably arises as to what is the primary role for an Adult Basic Education teacher/practitioner? The seemingly obvious answer: 'teaching' was not always the case. Differences in provision between states and different contexts prompted different answers. Thus, in some cases, (especially where there was heavy reliance on volunteer tutors), face to face teaching may not be the major role for the practitioner.

## 2.3 Competencies: Uses and Abuses

This issue highlights one of the difficulties of developing national standards - the balance of responsibilities will differ considerably. The danger here would be to believe that all competencies are relevant equally to all teachers in all contexts. **The competency statements are not particular job or practitioner descriptions. Rather, they describe the profession: they constitute a view of the whole field *but not* each particular context.**

This is the reason that the units of competency have not been weighted or put into a hierarchical order of some kind. The first four units of competency:

1. Adult learning and teaching approaches and practices
2. Selection and placement of students
3. Managing learning situations
4. Monitoring learning

focus on learning/teaching more directly, while units:

5. Evaluation of programs
6. Community communication and consultation
7. Professional development and training

are much broader, reflecting the roles of the practitioner related to institutions, communities and bureaucracies as well as highlighting ongoing professional development.

It is the case that by numbering the areas or units of competency a hierarchy is suggested (albeit implicitly), and some fragmentation occurs. There were suggestions from the field that a diagram should be developed making explicit the inter-relationships and interdependencies of the elements. This was beyond the scope of this project but could form the basis for applying the competencies in particular contexts. For example, a context such as workplace basic education could select from this document the competencies which are essential and present them in a way which highlights inter-relationships.

In relation to teacher appraisal, it would be highly inappropriate to use this document to 'assess' teachers. It is not an assessment document and cannot be turned into a checklist of items or tasks

to be observed. The approach to competency descriptions here, as outlined earlier in this report, is based on the belief that stated competencies are not necessarily observable in themselves (and certainly not observable in discrete tasks), but rather they are able to be inferred from performance. The cues are not to be seized upon as mandatory criteria, but are examples of guides to the sorts of evidence relevant to performance criteria.

If teacher appraisal is to be instituted, criteria should be developed by the profession itself, through the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL), and the union, in consultation with governments and/or bureaucracies. These competencies should then provide the basis for writing any guidelines or criteria.

It also needs to be stated that specific theories, methodologies, learning materials etc have not been singled out in the Elements or Performance Criteria. Even groups of theories may appear to have been omitted eg Unit 1.1, and following points, refer to theories of language. In this project, language includes both spoken and written language and theories of literacy. Specifity may occur in the Cues *eg Encourages critical thinking and reading to develop critical literacy skills in Unit 1.4* and*Uses variety of relevant resources and technology eg audio visual, computer, places, people, texts in Unit 3.2.*

When using this document to develop competency statements for different contexts, relevant theories or methodologies may be emphasised.

## 2.4 Competencies and Contexts

In the initial stages of the research, workshop participants identified a range of contexts in which Adult Basic Education practitioners worked. These included TAFE colleges, community settings, workplaces, prisons, Aboriginal communities, neighbourhood houses, senior colleges and evening colleges. These contexts were cross-referenced with a variety of types of courses such as: TAFE vocational courses, volunteer tutor training, distance education, special intervention programs and Skillshare courses, or student groups such as: physically or intellectually disabled students, ESOL students and Aboriginal students.

It was obvious that it would not be possible to develop competency descriptions pertaining to specific contexts. On the other hand, a set of very general competencies was considered to be inadequate. Therefore, the researchers and Steering Committee decided that the competencies should be developed in such a way that they would be relevant to any context, but the balance and weighting would not always be the same. It may be the case that in some particular contexts a whole unit would not be relevant. It is, nevertheless, important for practitioners working in these contexts to realise the scope of the profession, especially in relation to their own career development.

The research methodology for this project focused on discussion and consultation with the field about what constitutes 'good practice', and most Observations and Interviews yielded

information about what happens now. Indeed, the Critical Incident technique relies on this perspective. However, the competency descriptions need to look forward as well. Thus, it will be seen in chapter 5 that not all the Elements are validated equally. During the period of time that the competencies were being circulated and feedback sought, the Steering Committee, Working Party and other key personnel in the field made suggestions based on their own expertise, experience and knowledge of policy directions.

Other major decisions in the early stages of the project were that the competency statements would refer to experienced practitioners ie practitioners with several years experience in the field, and not be a description of entry criteria to the field. Throughout the project the question of time was raised: how long would it take to develop all the competencies? This is, of course, impossible to answer as it depends on such a range of variables. Teachers often don't have the opportunities to develop some of the competencies because of the contexts in which they work. Also, the field is still dominated by sessional/part-time/casual work in some states—a situation which necessarily restricts career paths and opportunities for development. Thus, any attempt to impose a general time scale for developing these competencies would be foolish.

## 2.5 Professional Development and Teacher Education

In chapter one of the report, some potential benefits of this project to the profession referred to professional development and career paths.

The competencies could be a basis for professional and staff development programs. Both managers and individual teachers would be able to target gaps and/or plan long term development. Teachers working in specific contexts, or in isolated contexts or in the early stages of their careers would be able to see the range of competencies within the field and get a good idea of the areas to develop if they wish to broaden their knowledge and skills.

There is also the opportunity to argue for funding for professional and staff development in order to have the opportunities to further careers. This is especially relevant for those working in areas with a restricted range of courses, for many sessional/part-time/casual staff and for practitioners working in relative isolation.

This report will inform all practitioners and help make all practitioners feel they are members of a profession. To achieve this, the chance to develop a variety of competencies should be available to everyone working in Adult Basic Education. Many teachers feel isolated or marginalised and have little idea of the profession as a whole. One of the reasons for this (apart from the part-time nature of the employment and often insecure funding for courses) is that, as a profession in its own right, Adult Basic Education is relatively young. There has been no professional registration board nor many relevant teacher education courses. A literature search has shown that very little has been written

about what characterises a professional Adult Basic Education practitioner. Consequently, notions of standards have come mainly from descriptions of practice. The field has grown in an interdisciplinary way taking from linguistics, psychology, sociology and other bodies of knowledge such as primary and secondary education.

The profession, through its national professional association, ACAL, and through publications, conferences and teacher education courses, is making more explicit the relationship between theory and practice, and demanding that this knowledge be made more accessible to all practitioners.

It is not necessary for everyone to be able to 'name' theories, but the understanding that there are theoretical underpinnings to good practice, and the opportunity to explore the links and expand repertoires, should be open to all Adult Basic Education practitioners through professional development.

The recognition of the Adult Basic Education competencies as a benchmark in the profession should inform the development and / or revision of pre-service and in-service teacher education courses and may help attain national coherence in higher education courses in the field. This may lead to national entry standards in the long term. Certainly, the need for professional qualifications for entry to the field was emphasised by participants in the project. Teacher education could not, of course, cover all the competencies; close liaison between higher education institutions and key employer groups could work out what is most relevant for teacher education courses, and what is best developed on the job and through professional development.

From the perspective of employment, designing job descriptions and criteria for employment across the field would also be enhanced. There may be a movement towards consistency of language in describing jobs or positions.

This chapter of the report has attempted to situate the research, explain positions taken and outline some of the issues and concerns in defining competencies. From the outset, the researchers and the Steering Committee believed that the research and findings should focus on defining the profession rather than on producing individualistic competencies for any kind of measurement.

# Chapter 3
# Research Methodology—
# Collecting the Data

## 3.1 Rationale for Combination of Techniques

The competencies were developed using a combination of techniques. In summary these were:

- Subject expert workshops—modified Functional Analysis
- Critical Incident interviews
- Observations of practising teachers
- Examination of duty statements
- Widespread consultation with members of the profession
- Consultation with other projects

In the interests of clarity it was necessary to set parameters for this project in terms of the field itself. Even though literacy is a key part of ESOL teaching for example, the researchers and Steering Committee decided to focus on Adult Basic Education personnel and documentation.

Our approach to identifying competencies and developing standards and indicators is based on analysis combining actual work tasks and attributes of the ABE teacher. By attributes we mean aspects of competence that are sometimes difficult to directly observe such as the capacity to think critically or show initiative. *Establishing Competency-based Standards in the Professions* (Gonczi, Hager & Oliver, 1990, pp 24-31) gives the detailed reasons why this approach is best suited for professional work. In essence this approach allows for the complexity of professional work while focusing on actual work contexts.

This approach has been used by a large number of professions including dietetics, occupational therapy, and specialist areas of law, podiatry, medical science. A detailed account of how this has been done is found in Ash, Gonczi and Hager, 1992.

The main benefit of this approach is that it delivers a manageable and assessable set of competencies eg Dietetics-6 major competencies and about 30 elements. We found a similar sized or slightly larger set of competencies in Adult Basic Education. This approach contrasts with the recent competency analysis of Nursing in Australia where a huge number of 'competencies' were identified and the assessment of so many competencies proved to be impractical.

The combination of the first three of the nominated techniques above, (modified Functional Analysis, Critical Incidents, Observations) has been carefully chosen to avoid the limitations each of them has if used in isolation. (See Gonczi, Hager & Oliver, 1990, Ch 6, for discussion of the importance of such controls).

## 3.2 Modified Functional Analysis Workshops

### Theoretical considerations

Functional Analysis is a workshop technique that was developed in the United Kingdom and has been widely used in the development of competency standards in recent years. It is one of a number of subject expert workshop techniques that can be used to undertake analysis of occupations. All the techniques are based on the capacity of people who are experienced at the job coming together, sharing their perceptions and arguing through any differences of opinion.

All these workshop techniques are characterised by a number of strengths and weaknesses. The greatest strengths are the cost effectiveness and the speed at which the mapping of the job can take place. The greatest theoretical weakness is the assumption that experts are capable of knowing what it is that makes them good at their job. That is, it assumes they have explicit rather than tacit knowledge. (This danger is at its greatest when experts are dealing with entry level jobs though this is not relevant here as this study concentrated on the competencies of the experienced and 'good' practitioner). Another danger of the workshops is the degree of representativeness of the workshop participants ie to what degree do the participants represent the profession as a whole.

Another weakness of the Functional Analysis workshop as practised in the United Kingdom is the failure to account sufficiently for the attributes that enable practitioners to undertake the functions of the profession. In the early work in the United Kingdom this resulted from an impoverished view of the nature of competence, as has been referred to earlier. It is for this reason that we have called our workshop technique **modified** Functional Analysis since it modified Functional Analysis to include a concentration on the attributes underlying performance.

The first of these weaknesses is taken into account in our modified Functional Analysis. Participants were taken through a structured set of questions which asked them to consider their profession *de novo*, starting with the development of the key purpose of the profession and moving through the key functions of the profession ie what needs to be done in the profession to achieve the key purpose. While experts are highly efficient at analysing the functions of the profession, constant reference needs to be made to the level for which the competencies are being developed ie experienced.

### Selection of workshop participants

The second of the problems, the degree of representativeness, was accounted for in this study by a two-level selection of the participants. The issue here was how to select experienced and 'good' practitioners. Forty well-known and respected practitioners representing a variety of contexts in which Adult Basic Education is practised, including the range of geographical contexts, were selected by the researchers. These practitioners were asked to nominate a number of experienced and 'good' practitioners. These lists were then consolidated

and practitioners were chosen whose name appeared on more than one list. The final list was drawn up taking into account the different states (see Appendix B for the participants). The same group participated in all the following workshops. The process of working through the competencies with their associated Performance Criteria took six days.

**Conduct of the workshops**

There were three two-day workshops conducted as part of the study. All the workshops were conducted in Sydney and facilitated by at least two of the researchers. The first workshop was held on 8- 9 October, 1991.

Agreement was reached on a statement to describe the key purpose of ABE teaching:

> **"To enable adults to identify and achieve literacy/ numeracy goals for personal, social, vocational and educational purposes."**

The workshop also listed all possible contexts for Adult Basic Education, and then attempted to list all possible tasks that are undertaken by a practitioner. With these lists in mind the group discussed how the tasks could be sorted into categories, and decided on ten possible Competency Areas or Units. These were:

1-2 Needs analysis, information gathering
2-3 Development of teaching/learning program
4-5 Teaching/learning methodology
6-7 Monitoring, evaluation
8 Advocacy
9 Continuing professional development
10 Consulting

**The workshop participants began drafting Elements for the Units**

The second workshop was held on 21-22 November, 1991. The outcomes of this were further discussion resulting from consultation by workshop members with other practitioners and interested parties and a reappraisal of the Units determined at the previous workshop. Elements and Performance Indicators drafted were further refined. Workshop members recommended experienced and 'good' practitioners who could be approached for interviews or Observation.

Units were reduced to seven:

1 Teaching and learning approaches and practices
2 Selection and placement of students
3 Managing learning situations
4 Monitoring student progress
5 Representing and planning
6 Continuing professional development
7 Evaluation of programs

The third workshop was held on 20-21 February, 1992. The outcomes of this were a further revision of Elements and Standards and the addition of Indicators and some changes of names of Units:

1 Adult learning and teaching approaches and practices
2 Selection and placement of students

3 Managing learning situations
4 Monitoring learning
5 Evaluation of programs
6 Community communication and consultation
7 Professional development and training

Again, workshop members had consulted with practitioners and interested parties in their area, and issues of concern were discussed. The level of practitioner under consideration was also discussed further and cross-referencing to the descriptors continued.

## 3.3 Critical Incidents

The original conception of Critical Incident interviews as developed by Flanagan (1954) was a technique used in the Defence Forces to identify the characteristics of successful performers in a variety of fields. The essence of this technique was the reports of supervisors. This technique has been modified by a number of researchers since that time (McClelland, 1973; Klemp, 1982; Spencer, 1983). These interviews have been called behavioural event interviews in some of the literature. These modifications usually use self-reporting and a structured format to unravel the tacit knowledge that has been established as an important part of expert knowledge (Benner, 1984). The use of this technique is particularly important where experts have been used in workshops (Boreham, 1990).

Critical Incident techniques focus on the attributes that enable successful resolution of significant professional dilemmas/ problem situations. A set of Critical Incident questions used by Benner to establish the difference between attributes of expert and novice in nursing was modified for use in this study. As can be seen in Appendix C the technique involves participants being asked to concentrate on an incident that they considered to be critical in or typical of their work. They are then asked a series of questions to enable them to reflect on the attributes demonstrated in the incident. A total of ninety four Critical Incident interviews were undertaken.

**Selection of interviewees**

Members of the Steering Committee and the Working Party were asked to supply names of experienced and 'good' ABE practitioners to the researchers. People were asked if they wanted to participate. In order to ensure there was representation from all contexts, additional recommendations were sought from key personnel in particular ABE contexts.

**Individual interviews**

A total of thirty telephone/face-to-face interviews was felt to be reasonable and manageable to cover the contexts of ABE. The researcher continued past this number to ensure as many contexts as possible had been covered. Thirty nine interviews in all were recorded ( including three respondents who offered two incidents). Of these, thirty five interviews were conducted by telephone, three were face-to-face and one respondent sent a written incident when telephone arrangements were unsuccessful.

The face-to-face individual interviews were found to be very time-consuming so it was more efficient to conduct interviews by telephone, as well as being able to reach distant geographical locations and a wide variety of contexts of ABE practice, for example, courses for Aboriginal students in Central Australia. It was found that the data collected from telephone interviews was well-prepared and focused. The following steps describe the process:

**Procedure**

**Step 1** Potential interviewees were phoned and asked for co-operation. A time for a 1/2 hour interview was set for one week later.
**Step 2** Interviewees were sent an information sheet and outline of Critical Incident questions.
**Step 3** Interviewees were asked the questions on the telephone. Probes based on areas of the competencies in the draft were used.
**Step 4** Critical Incidents were written up very soon after the telephone interview.

It was imperative that the Critical Incidents covered the range of contexts in which ABE takes place. As the Observations were conducted in NSW, Victoria and Queensland for logistical and funding reasons, it was decided that the majority of Critical Incident telephone interviews should be conducted in the other states. As can be seen from Table 1 below, Critical Incident interviews were undertaken with TAFE teachers, teachers in community settings, in SkillShare settings, in private settings and in universities. The figures for the number of interviews per state are also shown.

**Table 1**

| | |
|---|---|
| TAFE | 26 |
| DEIRT | 7 |
| Community | 3 |
| SkillShare | 2 |
| University | 1 |
| ACT | 5 |
| NSW | 5 |
| NT | 7 |
| SA | 8 |
| TAS | 7 |
| VIC | 2 |
| WA | 5 |
| QLD | 0 |

Table 2 below summarises the classes/levels within those settings

**Table 2**

| | |
|---|---|
| Beginning literacy/numeracy | 21 |
| Developing literacy/numeracy (certificate courses) | 7 |
| Mixed level (SkillShare, vocational, trade support in TAFE) | 9 |
| Bridging English | 1 |
| Teacher training | 1 |

In our judgement, the data gathered by this method enabled us to cover the large number of contexts and geographical situations without any loss of quality. Some examples of the data from the Critical Incidents are detailed in Appendix D.

**Group interviews**

Another technique was the use of group Critical Incident interviews where participants wrote a description of an incident. One group interview was undertaken at a VALBEC forum in Melbourne in May, 1992. This forum was a special workshop set up by two members of the Working Party to discuss the project, so the research officer could describe the progress of the project and hear feedback from the participants at the forum. Each participant was also asked to write a Critical Incident using the format sent out to the telephone interviewees. Thirty six incidents were thus obtained.

A second group interview was held with a number of practising ABE teachers from NSW who were in Sydney undertaking a block of advanced teacher training. These participants also wrote a description of a Critical Incident from their experience using the interview format and nineteen incidents were obtained.

A total of fifty five incidents were gathered from written interviews in Melbourne and Sydney, of which eleven were identified as country NSW. The contexts of provision are shown below in Table 3.

**Table 3**

| | |
|---|---|
| TAFE | 32 |
| Community | 14 |
| SkillShare | 3 |
| Private | 2 |
| University | 2 |
| Undisclosed | 2 |

The classes/levels within these settings are shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4**

| | |
|---|---|
| Beginning literacy/numeracy | 33 |
| Developing literacy/numeracy (certificate) | 9 |
| Mixed levels (workplace,vocational, trade support) | 11 |
| Teacher training/reflection | 2 |

These large group sessions also provided valuable feedback to the researchers.

## 3.4 Observations and Interviews

The aim of undertaking the Observations was primarily to verify the range of tasks that teachers undertake. Additionally, the researchers felt that they could infer at least some of the attributes of the ABE practitioner from the performance and the subsequent questioning. The actual Observations were limited to one teaching session of three to four hours and were not intended to observe the range of situations in which one teacher could be involved. However, it was felt that the interviews of approximately forty minutes after the class would help to elicit the range of teaching and allied activities. It was felt that it was preferable to observe a larger number of teachers rather than observe one or two teachers over an extended period. Twenty nine teachers were observed.

### Selection of teachers to be observed

Teachers were recommended by both the workshop group and the Steering Committee.

An attempt was made to balance city and country teachers but practical difficulties meant that there were more metropolitan teachers observed than country teachers. The table below summarises the contexts in which these teachers practise.

**Table 5**

| | |
|---|---|
| TAFE | 17 |
| Community | 7 |
| SkillShare | 2 |
| Private | 2 |
| University | 1 |
| | |
| NSW | 16 |
| QLD | 5 |
| VIC | 8 |

The classes/levels are shown below in Table 6.

**Table 6**

| | |
|---|---|
| Beginning literacy/numeracy | 13 |
| Developing literacy/numeracy (certificate) | 8 |
| Mixed levels (Workplace,vocational, trade support) | 6 |
| Tutor training | 2 |

**Procedure**

The Observations and the interviews which followed were undertaken in the following way:

**Step 1** The teacher was phoned to ask for co-operation and to make arrangements.

**Step 2** During the Observation, notes were taken about what happened in the class, including classroom interactions and also informal interactions in coffee breaks/socialising.

**Step 3** An interview with the teacher was undertaken after the class using the schedule in Appendix E. Questions were asked about the things observed, particularly why certain things observed were done. Questions were also asked about things not observed but contained in the draft competency document. Often students also talked to the observer.

**Step 4** Teachers were encouraged to ask about the project.

**Step 5** Observations were written up.

Some examples of the data collected through observing teachers is detailed in Appendix F.

## 3.5 Analysis of Data

The data collected through the Critical Incident interviews and the Observations/interviews was analysed and cross-referenced against the draft Elements and Performance Criteria using the example form below (Figure 1):

UNIT ONE: Adult Learning and Teaching Approaches and Practices

| ELEMENTS | Critical Inc/Obs | Attributes | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1 Applies knowledge of theories of language and language learning and teaching to develop adult literacy and numeracy skills. | | | |

**Figure 1** Form used for integration of data

The draft competencies developed during the workshops were modified to take account of tasks and attributes which had been identified in the validation process.

## 3.6 Duty Statements

To enable further verification and refinement of the competencies by comparison with pre-existing data, duty statements, curricula for ABE professional courses and other pertinent material were provided by Steering Committee members and workshop members.

Requests for duty statements and position descriptions resulted in a sample of documents from NSW, Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria:

**Tasmania**: Position Descriptions, Department of Employment, Industrial Relations and Training (no date).

**Queensland**: Duty Statement, Adult Literacy Teacher (1984), Department of Employment, Vocational Education and Training.

**Victoria**: Duties of a Teacher/Co-ordinator (English), ABEL Return to Study Department (March, 1992), Council of Adult Education, Victoria.

**NSW**: Statement of Duties (June 1986), Supplement to TAFE Gazette, No. 9; Statement of Duties, Adult Literacy Officer, Gazette 83.3.G5.
Adult Basic Education Mission Statement, June 1990, TAFE NSW.

## 3.7 Reference to other Projects

Other adult literacy projects with which information was shared were:

- Development of Competencies for Adult Basic Education Teachers in Workplace Contexts (Broadmeadow TAFE, Victoria).
- Workplace Literacy Professional Development Project (University of Adelaide, University of South Australia).
- Developing a Professional Development Package for Adult and Workplace Literacy (Deakin University).
- Development of Gender Inclusive Guidelines for Adult Literacy Curricula (University of South Australia).
- Pedagogical Relationships between Adult ESL and Adult Literacy (NCELTR, Macquarie University and University of Technology, Sydney).
- TAFE National Staff Development Project.

In addition, the researchers had discussions with researchers undertaking competency development projects in other industries/professions such as Medical Radiation Sciences, Speech Pathology, Youth Work, and with researchers in the Youth Workers' Project and researchers developing the Workplace Trainer Competency Standards.

## 3.8 General Consultation with the Field

There were a number of consultations:

- Summer School, La Trobe University (February, 1992): paper to participants to explain the nature and report the progress of the project. Participants' comments were welcomed.
- VALBEC: progress report on the project given at a one-day forum at Footscray College of TAFE (May, 1992). The methodology and issues arising were discussed with participants, and participants provided a Critical Incident from their own experiences.
- UTS: report on the project given to students in two classes of the Graduate Diploma in Adult Education (Basic Education).

Comments were invited. Country students provided a Critical Incident from their own experiences.

- CATALPA Bulletin: article giving background information about the project and progress report circulated to the mailing list of over 1000 members throughout Australia.
- Project Updates: during the course of the data collection, two newsletters explaining the nature of the project and its progress were sent to Adult Literacy co-ordinators in each state, for distribution to the field. Feedback from the field was requested.
- ACAL Conference: seminar report on the findings of the project was presented and feedback invited.
- Individuals: to ensure a national focus, discussions were held with Adult Literacy practitioners and personnel.
- Workshop members asked colleagues and interested parties for reactions to the draft Units and Elements. This gave a range of responses from South Australia, Victoria, Queensland and city and country NSW.

## 3.9 Further Documents

Other documents examined included:

- Course documents of the Graduate Diploma in Adult Education (Basic Education), University of Technology, Sydney.
- *Good Practice,* the series of pamphlets distributed to ABE teachers throughout Australia, providing information and ideas for teaching and integrating theory and practice.

Items chosen for publication in *Good Practice* describe activities which:

1 Are student-centred and include joint decision-making wherever appropriate.
2 Reflect whole-language learning principles, including the integration of reading, writing, talking, listening and thinking in a communicative environment.
3 Reflect the principle that learning best takes place through activities with purpose and relevance to students in their own social and cultural context.
4 Reflect the wide variety of Australian provision (community-based, college-based, library-based...) and their commonly held principles, such as voluntary participation, student-centred curriculum and open access.
5 Have proven successful in terms of achieving student goals and have wide acceptance amongst experienced practitioners. (*Good Practice,* 15, March 1992, p 1)

The criteria for publication of articles in *Good Practice* listed above are ones which were demonstrated in the Critical Incidents and Observations.

# Chapter 4
# Practitioner Competencies for Adult Basic Education

## 4.1
## Unit 1: Adult Learning and Teaching Approaches and Practices

| *ELEMENTS* | *PERFORMANCE CRITERIA* | *CUES (EXAMPLES)* |
|---|---|---|
| 1.1 Applies knowledge of theories of language and language learning and teaching to develop adult literacy and numeracy skills. | 1.1 A range of approaches to language learning and teaching is used that takes into account knowledge of the individual student and the purpose of the task. Sensitivity to student need is demonstrated as is adaptability to student language and learning development. The use of these approaches is explained and justified in terms of current approaches to language in social context. | 1. Justifies the use of particular strategies for a group or individual students where appropriate.<br>2. Refers to established and current theories of language and language learning in justifying learning/teaching strategies.<br>3. Identifies established and current theories of language learning.<br>4. Discusses with students the reasons for particular classroom practices where appropriate. |
| 1.2 Applies knowledge of theories of mathematics learning and teaching to develop adult numeracy skills. | 1.2 A range of approaches to mathematics learning and teaching is used that takes into account knowledge of the individual student, and the purpose of the task. Sensitivity to student need is demonstrated as is adaptability to student mathematics and learning development. The use of these approaches is explained and justified in terms of current approaches to mathematics in social context. | 1. Justifies the use of particular strategies for a group or individual students where appropriate.<br>2. Refers to established and current theories of mathematics learning in justifying learning/teaching strategies.<br>3. Identifies established and current theories of mathematics learning.<br>4. Discusses with students the reasons for particular classroom practices where appropriate. |
| 1.3 Applies knowledge of theories of learning, including learning relevant to adults in any ABE situation. | 1.3 Approaches to learning and learning principles relevant to adults are discussed and modelled in all ABE situations. Teachers promote independence and self-direction in the learner and challenge students to expand their learning horizons at the same time as meeting students' expressed, immediate needs. Taking into account issues of culture and gender, teachers explore with students and/or model ways of learning and using language and mathematics. The experiences that adults bring to the classroom in learning activities are acknowledged and incorporated. Teachers also use the classroom dynamic to reflect mutual respect between teacher and student, and student to student. | 1. Makes allowances for students' commitments outside the classroom.<br>2. Adapts lesson plan to incorporate students' immediate concerns.<br>3. Demonstrates use of student selected materials and content.<br>4. Discusses with students the reasons for selection of approaches, methodologies and materials.<br>5. Sees evidence of students initiating and continuing learning. |
| 1.4 Uses a variety of learning and teaching strategies to pursue literacy and numeracy goals for personal, social, educational and vocational purposes. | 1.4 Theories of language, mathematics and learning are used to design activities and develop strategies to respond with patience and humour to a wide range of abilities and attitudes within a group. Teachers modify strategies and activities, and employ different methodologies, in the light of the changing learning/teaching situation. | 1. Demonstrates a relationship between texts used and the interests of students.<br>2. Models use of reference materials eg dictionaries.<br>3. Encourages critical thinking and reading to develop critical literacy skills.<br>4. Introduces a range of resources.<br>5. Uses authentic and relevant learning materials and tasks.<br>6. Adapts future session plans on basis of students' interests.<br>7. Uses an appropriate range of technologies. |



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## 4.2
## Unit 2: Selection and Placement of Students

| *ELEMENTS* | *PERFORMANCE CRITERIA* | *CUES (EXAMPLES)* |
|---|---|---|
| 2.1 Interviews, assesses, places or refers students. | 2.1 In interviewing and assessing students, teachers use interview techniques which draw out relevant information and inform students of a variety of possibilities, set students at ease and negotiate placement. Teachers continually reappraise information throughout the interview and set aside prior judgement. Teachers recognise students' expressed immediate needs and future needs and take into account specific socio-cultural and cognitive needs. Teachers use or devise assessment tools and procedures based on theories of learning, language and mathematics which view learning as occurring through purposeful meaning-centred tasks.<br><br>Teachers have knowledge of local providers and agencies, and knowledge of availability / suitability of options within and outside own institution / program. This process culminates in teachers using this professional judgement to make an appropriate placement or referral. | 1. Consults with colleagues in placement process.<br>2. Uses texts/tasks which reflect authentic language and mathematics use.<br>3. Uses a range of tests/tasks which reflect students' needs and skills.<br>4. Has available information about alternative learning or referral options.<br>5. Demonstrates questioning and feedback techniques which elicit open responses.<br>6. Demonstrates negotiating skills in discussions with students. |
| 2.2 In selecting students, requirements of government and organisation policies are balanced with the learning needs of individuals. | 2.2 Learning needs of individuals are viewed within the context of prevailing policies and practices. Teachers make decisions which attempt to satisfy the needs of both government policies/organisations as well as individuals. Where necessary teachers may challenge the system in order to meet student needs. | 1. Explains reasons for placement and referral to outside agencies where appropriate.<br>2. Explains why specific programs are available. |
| 2.3 Uses a documentation system which records interviews and placement or referral outcomes to meet the government/ organisation / student requirements. | 2.3 Particular needs for reporting and record keeping relevant to all interested parties are ascertained. Discretion is used to devise and use a system that allows the confidentiality of students to be maintained. These record keeping processes include statistical information and records to enable monitoring of student progress. | 1. Records the information required by the government/organisation in a systematic way.<br>2. Records information in a variety of ways appropriate to the needs of stakeholders. |

## 4.3
## Unit 3: Managing Learning Situations

| *ELEMENTS* | *PERFORMANCE CRITERIA* | *CUES (EXAMPLES)* |
|---|---|---|
| 3.1 Uses knowledge of curriculum theories and curriculum documents to develop and implement a program/curriculum compatible with individual, group and program needs. | 3.1 Theoretical knowledge, previous experiences and information from the interview/assessment process, and familiarity with curriculum documents, are used to develop and implement a program/curriculum which responds to individual/group needs. Teachers draw on their knowledge of language and mathematics learning and curriculum theories and practices. | 1. Assists students to identify goals<br>2. Explains learning/teaching activities and other curriculum choices in relation to identified short and long term goals.<br>3. Presents evidence of planned learning and curriculum choices.<br>4. Explains approaches to developing/implementing a curriculum. |
| 3.2 Manages time, space and resources to maximise educational outcomes. | 3.2 Initiative and flexibility are shown when choosing learning materials and other resources, methods of student interaction (eg 1:1, pair, groups), modes of delivery and curriculum content. These choices are made to maximise learning and to achieve realistic outcomes within time frames. Teachers confer with colleagues regarding effectiveness of their programs. | 1. Uses variety of relevant resources and technology eg audio visual, computer, places, people, texts.<br>2. Balances the development of competence with a time frame.<br>3. Allocates time to discuss programs with colleagues. |
| 3.3 Adapts curriculum in the light of changing circumstances and changing student needs. | 3.3 Flexibility in modifying or extending curriculum and ability to justify changes within overall curriculum plan are demonstrated. | 1. Acknowledges unplanned directions/events.<br>2. Judges the extent to which these unplanned events are incorporated into curriculum/program.<br>3. Justifies changes to curriculum/program.<br>4. Incorporates appropriate adaptive technologies eg specialist computer programs for visually impaired students, electronic mail for students with physical disabilities.<br>5. Shows knowledge of different modes of delivery. |

## 4.4
## Unit 4: Monitoring Learning

| *ELEMENTS* | *PERFORMANCE CRITERIA* | *CUES (EXAMPLES)* |
|---|---|---|
| 4.1 Uses knowledge of current theories of language, mathematics and learning to select and evaluate appropriate assessment methods. | 4.1 Current theories of language, mathematics and learning are used to design and implement assessment procedures for formative and summative purposes. Assessment tools and techniques are based on the accumulated research in assessing learning, language and mathematical development. Student and teacher assessment is based on meaningful reading, writing and/or mathematical tasks that are relevant to and integrated with a students' program. | 1. Demonstrates from student records a practical application of a variety of assessment tools and techniques at different points—initial, ongoing and exit.<br>2. Explains available assessment methods and why certain ones are more appropriate than others.<br>3. Teachers and students use common language to discuss and record progress.<br>4. Encourages students to be critical of their own work.<br>5. Reassures unconfident learners in relation to assessment. |
| 4.2 Modifies students' programs as a result of continual monitoring. | 4.2 Students' programs are adjusted in the light of progress. This may be expressed as competencies. Teachers negotiate with students to continually clarify learning goals and to incorporate these into programs. Student self-assessment is encouraged by providing tasks which progressively develop students' abilities to set goals, analyse achievements and self-assess. | 1. Chooses assessment processes and criteria which allow teachers to identify students' strengths and weaknesses.<br>2. Ensures that students express goals and self-assess progress towards them.<br>3. Adjusts students' programs as a result of short term achievements/competencies.<br>4. Adjusts students' programs to continue to work towards long-term goals.<br>5. Confers with colleagues about student progress. |
| 4.3 Documents students' progress in ways meaningful to students' supervisors and those to whom there is a reporting requirement. | 4.3 Assessment records and program modifications are explained to and discussed with specific audiences including students, training institutions, workplaces and other stakeholders. Teachers are aware of different program requirements which call for different responses to recording and monitoring student progress eg courses where curriculum is wholly/partially externally set, and are able to document accordingly. | 1. Maintains accessible records.<br>2. Meets documentation requirements for different programs.<br>3. Helps students record their own progress.<br>4. Discusses methods of recording progress with students.<br>5. Demonstrates discretion and sensitivity in conveying student progress to outside bodies.<br>6. Gives reports of programs to appropriate audiences. |
| 4.4 Continually reflects on and adjusts own practice. | 4.4 Critical self reflection is developed and consultation with students, colleagues and others is carried out to monitor and adjust own practice. | 1. Provides time in classroom context for individual and group discussion.<br>2. Engages in peer consultation.<br>3. Uses knowledge and ideas from professional development to appraise effectiveness of monitoring progress. |

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# 4.5
# Unit 5: Evaluation of Programs

| *ELEMENTS* | *PERFORMANCE CRITERIA* | *CUES (EXAMPLES)* |
|---|---|---|
| 5.1 Examines existing models of evaluation to adopt and incorporate appropriate evaluation strategies, and uses the evaluation of courses for revision, planning and development. | 5.1 Rationale for choice of evaluation strategy is provided to relevant groups. In doing this teachers draw on their knowledge of evaluation models and make judgements about use. Teachers use information gained from evaluation process for program revision, planning and development. Teachers may need to devise new program evaluation procedures. | 1. Explains types and purposes of evaluation.<br>2. Uses/devises appropriate measures to collect data eg surveys, questionnaires, statistical data.<br>3. Able to use appropriate technology.<br>4. Uses data from 2 as part of further planning.<br>5. Matches evaluation process and techniques with purpose of evaluation. |
| 5.2 Reports to relevant authorities on program effectiveness. | 5.2 Reporting procedures for students, peers, managers, funding bodies and other stakeholders are developed. This reporting clearly reflects the implications of information drawn from course evaluation. Evaluation reports are assembled and made available to relevant groups in a format that is accessible and meaningful to them. Information is provided in relation to student articulation into further courses/training and the relationship to ongoing course and program development is made clear. | 1. Provides evidence of clear reporting.<br>2. Involves students and colleagues in evaluation procedure where appropriate. |

## 4.6
## Unit 6: Community Communication and Consultation

| *ELEMENTS* | *PERFORMANCE CRITERIA* | *CUES (EXAMPLES)* |
|---|---|---|
| 6.1 Raises awareness, consults and negotiates with a range of government/industrial/community organisations on issues relevant to ABE provision | 6.1 Relevant organisations in the community are identified and contact is established. Teachers identify the ABE focus, negotiate a working relationship and prepare a submission for funding where appropriate. This contact and negotiation could be in response to community organisations and/or government initiative and policies. Teachers conduct local promotional and publicity activities and courses. | 1. Provides evidence of networking/co-operation/referrals occurring with local organisations.<br>2. Provides evidence of some promotional publicity activity. eg a portfolio of examples.<br>3. Provides examples of submissions prepared for funding requests.<br>4. Demonstrates that courses reflect community needs and/or government policies. |
| 6.2 Represents ABE both within the teachers' workplace and in the wider community. | 6.2 Liaison and active participation in meetings and committees across a teachers' workplace and with outside agencies are carried out. Teachers use effective communication skills when advocating for ABE. | 1. Attends meetings and provides follow up action.<br>2. Provides evidence of networking within workplace.<br>3. Provides evidence of networking with outside bodies. |
| 6.3 Plans and implements ABE programs. | 6.3 Needs analyses are undertaken and priorities are set. Teachers negotiate most effective and appropriate types of programs and modes of delivery with relevant groups. Teachers can identify funding sources, contribute to submissions for program provision, prepare budgets and keep clear records. | 1. Conducts needs analyses.<br>2. Identifies a range of modes of delivery eg 1:1, small group, distance.<br>3. Justifies choice of program and delivery mode.<br>4. Identifies types of programs available eg primary literacy focus; vocational area/literacy integration/train the trainer/numeracy workshop.<br>5. Documents administrative procedures. |

## 4.7
## Unit 7: Professional Development and Training

| *ELEMENTS* | *PERFORMANCE CRITERIA* | *CUES (EXAMPLES)* |
|---|---|---|
| 7.1 Is informed about current issues, policies and theoretical debates in the field of ABE. | 7.1 Educational issues relevant to the field are understood and evaluated. Teachers call on a range of strategies and networks to obtain information. | 1. Participates in formal/informal discussions on educational issues.<br>2. Identifies local networks, electronic networks, professional bodies & other sources of information. |
| 7.2 Is actively involved in continuing professional development in the field of ABE. | 7.2 Professional development is ongoing. Teachers participate in a variety of professional development activities and use these activities as bases to reflect on their practice. | 1. Participates in local networks/ information sessions<br>2. Attends professional conferences.<br>3. Engages in further formal study.<br>4. Participates in local committees/ staff meetings.<br>5. Reads current professional publications.<br>6. Is a member of relevant professional association(s). |
| 7.3 Makes a contribution to the field of ABE. | 7.3 New knowledge and information is disseminated to peers both informally and formally. Teachers take opportunities to promote discussion and take part in debates on current issues relevant to theory and practice. Teachers take part in peer support programs, curriculum development projects and research initiatives. The role of research in the field is valued. | 1. Initiates discussion about professional practices.<br>2. Contributes to professional publications, seminars and conferences at local and/or national levels.<br>3. Participates in the activities of relevant professional association(s).<br>4. Responds to requests for information and assistance in research projects.<br>5. Acts as adviser to teacher trainers.<br>6. Delivers staff development sessions or programs eg *Working Together, Learning to Learn, Moving from Strength to Strength, Breaking the Maths Barrier.* |
| 7.4 Maximises the contribution of volunteers to the field of ABE. | 7.4 A range of approaches to teaching and learning in ABE is explored in training volunteers and teachers are familiar with current materials available in tutor training. Teachers use the training process to model good teaching practice. Teachers understand and support the different kinds of contributions made by volunteers to the field. | 1. Explains the variety of contributions volunteers can make in the field.<br>2. Demonstrates familiarity with up-to-date, tutor training materials.<br>3. Delivers tutor training programs.<br>4. Models incorporation of principles relevant to adult learning in tutor training.<br>5. Provides evidence of provision of ongoing monitoring support for volunteers. |

# Chapter 5
# Validating the Competencies

## Introduction

The research phases necessitated the collection of a great deal of data which was either transcribed or carefully summarised.

This chapter presents a closer look at a selection of the data demonstrating the process of validation from the Critical Incidents, Observations and Interviews. The Elements comprising each of the competency areas are listed followed by quotes from practitioners or comments summarised by the researchers from an Observation and Interview. The teaching contexts are also indicated. The quotes in italics are taken from the Critical Incidents and those in roman refer to the Observations and Interviews.

In both chapters 4 and 5 practitioners use terms such as *course/curriculum/program/subject* in ways which may be confusing for the reader. It is acknowledged that different states use terms differently and also that definitions and descriptors are currently changing in most states as ABE provision becomes subject to greater policy intervention.

Practitioners responded positively to the Critical Incident request and spent time thinking about a suitable incident to relate. Many commented that they were pleased to have input into this project.

The incidents frequently highlighted times which could be best described as 'turning points' in a student's learning or a positive change in self esteem or attitude.

> *...(I)...grew tired of hearing 'I can't, I've never...'. Suddenly, (I) was struck by a bolt or something and (I) said 'Right, that's it, I know very well you've all been hiding your talents. Next week we're having a Brag Session and each of you will have two minutes to brag about anything you* ***can*** *do!!...(the following week) The group met and hey presto! there was a woman who bragged about a jumper she had been knitting for 3 years; a man who could ride a motorcycle and rode it to prove it; a woman with a yummy cake; a man with a golf trophy. Yes, all of these people had something good to say and that night changed a lot of things...the incident made everyone look at themselves and others differently. It also opened up the doors for reflecting on learning.* (beginning literacy)

Literacy and numeracy were most often seen as means to ends.

> *I was struck again by the fact that poor literacy locks students out of knowledge about so many areas and topics of knowledge.* (beginning literacy)
>
> *Literacy extends beyond the functional, to teaching for a wider appreciation, bringing feelings to a conscious level. Students should come to enjoy reading and writing and not be intimidated.* (beginning literacy)

One of the most significant attributes emerging from the interviews is the commitment of practitioners in the field. This

commitment manifests itself principally in the learner-teacher relationship where negotiation is a key factor and where initial assessment, regular monitoring of student progress, reflection and evaluation are all shared and integral parts of the learning process.

There is a strong sense that the role of the ABE teacher includes being a representative or advocate for students and for ABE. As well, there is concern at the increasing 'outside' (political) pressures for accountability. Thus, the question of confidentiality of student records and reporting procedures are seen as important issues where the ABE practitioner has to have a range of skills and wide knowledge of the socio-political contexts. A practitioner needs to be aware of students' personal, cultural and social backgrounds and their implications for learning when negotiating placements and learning programs.

The range of competencies reflects the widening roles of the ABE teacher, some of which can be brought together and seen in a political context in this comment:

> *In ABE they talk a lot about obstacles to learning: housing, income, health, relationships, bureaucracy, law. The earlier in the program, the more students have complications from all these. They have to practise being powerful, knowing their rights...Teachers can't be all things to all people, they have to focus on linguistic, intellectual and conceptual development—(concepts) from the Genre school where (it is said) language forms our cultural values.* (beginning literacy)

## 5.1 Unit 1: Adult Learning and Teaching Approaches and Practices

**Element 1.1 Applies knowledge of theories of language and language learning and teaching to develop adult literacy and numeracy skills**

A range of theoretical knowledge and theoretical models is quoted by practitioners. Several teachers commented that they had had teacher training but would like to have further training to become more aware of 'theories'. Approaches most named are the Whole Language approach and the Genre approach.

> *As this is a community venue, students who come are local so that they are not selected on educational grounds and often the group is not homogeneous...The disparity in ability in the group means a lot of preparation to have tasks for some students while the others receive one-to-one. I use Cambourne's notion of engagement, tapping into students' experiences and opinions to build on their strengths in order to help with the weaknesses. I use language experience and creative writing when appropriate, and find genre models useful. I do not use traditional grammar.* (beginning literacy with some intellectual disability)

*Genre is used: empowering the students through letter-writing, opinion writing; process-writing methods are used for drafting and polishing stages.* (English Cert.)

Some refer to psycholinguistics and some to critical literacy. A few refer to traditional grammar or to phonics. Every person interviewed has a personal philosophy on which they base their teaching and with which they justify what they do; it is more often a belief about how adults learn than about language or language acquisition. The majority of teachers prefer to use a variety of approaches to language learning, basing them essentially on students' needs and responses.

*I will use whatever works, and do not believe in excluding something because it is not in vogue. The key is relevance to the student—to see what he needs so that he is comfortable in dealing with life; the forms, the news, the letters from school—to read and respond.* (intellectual disability)

**This lesson aimed to help students understand the local council's Annual Report. Each student is given photocopies of records containing a lot of graphs and statistics. Elicitation by question and answer follow: "Is the information clear? Could you complain? How? What sort of letter? How much information is there in the graph of nationalities in the area? What could we do to get a full picture? Who could we ring? Or write to? How do we read this statistic? How do you remember how to spell statistic—if I rub it off the board, can you spell it now?" Students respond to the questions with suggestions and become very involved. Teacher justifies the task: "We are going to write a booklet for another class; explain it in your words. It's got to be in easy language for other classes to understand. What's another word for 'reside'? – yes, 'live'." The text is jointly constructed by small groups on butchers' paper as students draft sentences from the graphs and statistics. Teacher encourages inferences from students through discussion, using divergent questions and calling on their own experience. She reassures a tentative student that she will help with the spelling at the next stage before they make the booklet. They will get it typed. She draws a quiet student into the group task by sitting with him at first. Each group has a lot of information on paper and is beginning to write it up in an organised way by the lunch break. (unemployed men)**

**Element 1.2 Applies knowledge of theories of mathematics learning and teaching to develop adult numeracy skills**

The common thread throughout the observations is the teacher as facilitator in learning, moving around the group providing tasks as needed by students, using real and relevant materials. Teachers in the workplace teach problem-solving skills based on workplace tasks. Building confidence and the readiness to take risks (eg guessing, estimating) are commonly observed components of these numeracy classes, where teachers move from concrete to abstract examples. Teachers are aware of cross-cultural differences in numeracy concepts and aware of the need to explicate maths language.

**There is a student-led discussion of how they did fractions at school—"it went straight over my head". The teacher is reassuring "we're filling in the gaps now". The teacher emphasises that the concrete materials are a better way for many people to learn, students agree that it is easier when they can see the fractions. The teacher draws on the discussion—**

**"why do we learn from a game?"—they discuss anxiety and how a game helps them to relax and so learn. The teacher emphasises that getting maths out of your head and onto the tables makes it easier, less stressful. Students are encouraged to talk about how they feel about maths, and how they felt at school. (Maths Cert.)**

*Using a 'discovery method' with calculator skills with a basic numeracy class helped me to link theory with practice. It helped students see the purpose of learning. It was more than them acquiring skills, but also knowledge and attitudes...(this is now) a group of students who are open-minded, prepared to take risks, and setting goals.* (beginning numeracy)

**In explanations the teacher constantly works from the known to the unknown, from the concrete to the abstract. When students have difficulty, the teacher tries different explanations of the same thing: "It is important to understand where you're at, to know where to go next..." (vocational numeracy—mixed levels)**

**Element 1.3. Applies knowledge of theories of learning, including learning relevant to adults in any ABE situation**

Many teachers interviewed speak in Freirian terms of empowerment and access, of the need to negotiate with students, to give choices and to encourage goal-setting and risk-taking. The importance of trust and confidentiality is also stressed—as are respect for their students, their prior learning and experiences. The need to provide relevance in teaching and to foster independent learning and autonomy are recognised as basic principles of teaching adults.

*They were more independent after the course, more articulate and able to say "no". I put a lot of emphasis on this, they should tell me what they want. When they are ready to leave and move on to other classes they have to be able to ask other teachers to give them what they want. Towards the end of the course they were taking responsibility for their learning... They had input into the course and it changed accordingly.* (preparation for Jobtrain, NESB women)

*Literacy is a vital tool in education for life: beyond the vocational competencies. It gives them another chance, they come to understand the world they live in. Therefore I stress activities for lateral thinking and problem-solving. I try to tackle group needs first and individual needs through the tasks. The course aims to be holistic and language-centred, with the teacher deliberately standing back so that the students express their own opinions. The cultural expectations of the group are that the teacher has the knowledge and the power—I try to lessen this, to be a part, not the centre of the class.* (SIP-NESB men)

*...their new knowledge (about metrics) gave the students skills that could and would be applied outside the classroom; eg shopping progressed from fear of the unknown to understanding.* (Maths Cert.)

*The student can't learn if he is worried about other things—the group dynamic is important—so that each is comfortable to try things and not fear being put down. Students want to be part of the group, I do not force separate activities. Each has his own needs, and the session is an important part of his life. It is important that the student has access to everything the community has. The problem is how to help those who can't contribute much.* (intellectual disability)

*Students in a writing class moved onto using computers, with one student showing how: ...They were in charge of their own learning. Taking risks which a week before were unimaginable, learning by mistakes and learning from each other...As a teacher I only had to facilitate, the group was in control of their own learning. For me the quintessence of teaching is to get people to the stage where they know what they want and how to achieve it. This is the exciting thing about teaching and what for me makes it most satisfying.* (beginning literacy)

Some teachers work in difficult circumstances, with students reluctant and resentful at having to attend classes, or frustrated and angry about their situation. Despite provocations, teachers remain good-humoured and patient. They allow expression of students' feelings and deal with them as sensitively as possible, endeavouring to get the lesson back on track if possible. When students have personal problems, teachers know where to refer them. On the whole, teachers are able to deflect student hostility and diminish tensions. Teachers encourage the group to show respect for each other and some introduce specific activities to build up a positive group dynamic, as well as modelling respect and listening.

*She openly related her personal circumstances to the statistical data she was reporting (on sexual harassment). The response from the other male students was very supportive and they too felt able to become open about incidents known to them...it had become a real learning group...enabling, open, honest, supportive, and developed in the students the ability to deal with a fairly confronting experience, ...as well as learning and demonstrating skills in research writing and presentation, ...tolerance and active participation.* (workplace)

*The student needed to talk to someone urgently ...She told me of a panic attack she just experienced in class, and that they had been occurring more and more frequently over the past week. A single mother with two pre-schoolers, she was worried she'd pass out on them. I knew I needed to find a local experienced, suitable counsellor...I was anxious, aware of my lack of experience and understanding, but quite clear that I had to do something. I knew, however, that "something" didn't mean my feeling I had to solve the situation.* (beginning literacy)

**Element 1.4 Uses a variety of learning and teaching strategies to pursue literacy and numeracy goals for personal, social, educational and vocational purposes**

A distinctive feature of the observations is the flexibility of teachers. A range of activities is provided and a variety of learning and teaching strategies are employed in many teaching contexts. The teacher circulates frequently to monitor and assist, either one-to-one with a student or with a class as a group. Features common to all classes observed are the teacher's good-humour and patience.

The variety and range of tasks observed included the use of materials as diverse as current newspaper or magazine articles, road signs, forms, letters, short stories and poems. The tasks included teaching strategies ranging from discussion, read and re-tell and comprehension questions to cloze and matching exercises.

Other tasks observed demonstrate the variety of learning strategies in use eg from the development of reference skills and autonomous learning as students learn to use reference books, dictionaries, thesauruses and street directories, to the development of research skills and summary and note-taking techniques.

Spelling is similarly taught using a range of activities eg games, and employing a wide variety of strategies relevant to student needs and building on student strengths. Spelling strategies such as those using the visual memory eg the look-cover-write-check method of learning a word, through to the more analytical strategies eg self-diagnosis or historical/structural analysis, demonstrate the many ways that teachers approach individualised student learning needs for particular purposes.

Spelling is taught explicitly ie spelling skills and learning strategies are explained to students. This is often at the point of need with student writing. The learning strategies explored focus on reducing student anxiety about spelling through increased skills and increased writing and spelling independence, and through understanding about how learning operates and how learning techniques can be useful.

Process writing with an emphasis on drafting and conferencing was observed frequently, with peer-evaluation and group discussion of writing models. Language experience and writing with the teacher as a scribe is often used for beginning literacy students, and a variety of genres are taught to a range of student writers and readers using many different text types eg procedural, expository. Letter writing is one popular task where genre-based approaches are used and where students examine models and write their own letters for relevant and authentic purposes.

Teachers encourage discussion and emphasise turn-taking and respect for the student speaking. Frequently coffee breaks are used for informal conversation, and NESB and intellectually disabled students particularly value these socialising and language opportunities.

Teachers are versatile in providing a range of activities for different levels of ability in their classes. Teachers are flexible in their readiness to pick up on students' interests. Concrete materials are frequently used to give hands-on experience especially when teaching numeracy. Games are used to engage students' interests and to reduce anxiety, and teachers are patient and enthusiastic about student progress. In the workplace, tasks are specific to the context; however, teachers frequently arrange individual and group tasks to meet students' needs.

> *The Assisted Independent Learning Program consisted of 10 students from different walks of life on individual programs: a cleaner; a waitress wanting to go on to further study; a long-term unemployed man; a NESB grandmother wanting to write her life story; a young woman given a position in the typing pool but lacking confidence with grammar and spelling; a student wanting to be a DJ; one sent by his employer; one in a promotion position having to write job interview reports; a young man in a car accident with some brain damage—he had lost reading/writing abilities; and a very young man, 17 yrs, a factory worker, who was keen on pinball machines and was most difficult—he didn't value education.*
>
> *Although they were on individual programs, I involved them in a group activity to develop research skills to do presentations. This developed from a talk in the coffee break. The broad topic was communication; they researched newspapers, radio, TV, in pairs or threes. Each week there were various tasks on how to work together on the joint presentation, if some didn't want to then they should accept the group decision; I set deadlines and they decided what to do and how to do it.*
>
> *In the end a lot of energy and work resulted: they would come in after hours, and go to the library. It worked very well. They felt valued as each role was valued ie talking, reading. We worked through it together and when there were family commitments I gave them extra time.*
>
> *The key was that the students had ownership—it was challenging. I had thought it was too hard and that I was expecting too much, but they rose to the occasion—their research skills were up to it. I learnt not to lower my expectations. We had a big restaurant celebration lunch and everyone turned up, it was a special group.*
>
> *It was significant because everyone was working together, supporting each other. I made clear to them that this was a valuable part of the learning process. Students learnt trust—we knew each other and I used the coffee breaks to socialise and work on the dynamics of the group. There was no isolated learning.* (assisted independent learning)

**When the rest of the group return from morning tea, the teacher picks up on the problem of memory and discusses it**

**with the group. He emphasises the need to understand the memory process, that it isn't instant, that revising helps. "It is important to understand where you're at to know where to go next" (encouraging metacognition and the articulation of problems.)**

**Introduces Kim's Game as a memory aid, a tray with 10 items, and explains how it is played. One student calls out the names of some of the objects, the teacher doesn't remonstrate but quietly indicates to do it silently. The student still asks a question and inadvertently spoils the game but the teacher lets it pass as do the other students. Throughout the session he has shown patience with this student, now he asks the student to tell the group how he remembered the items, and the student responds positively. The teacher asks students to explain how they remembered the items and amplifies each answer, modelling more precise language, and providing a generalisation for their specific answer eg Student: "things started with 'p'"; Teacher: "yes, make connections using the letters of the alphabet." Discusses the notion that it would be cheating to have written down the items, that students have to put boundaries on their learning—that it would have been a good idea to write it down. Students explore their ways of learning through the discussion, and agree that repeating something and practice help, and that the hands-on practice that they have had with the computer has taken away their initial fears. The teacher is very involved with this discussion, enthusiastic about their dawning understanding that they learn from experience and that there is not only one way to learn. Stresses individual differences. Points from the discussion are reinforced on the board by the teacher as he talks. He encourages the students to relate to their own experiences in learning, and builds a broad summary of the main points. He shows an OHT with a flow chart about learning and the barriers that interfere.**

**The teacher relates the discussion to the hardware trade; how there are many new things and names to remember and how the students should try the different memory approaches that they have talked about. (vocational-mixed levels)**

Both the Critical Incidents and the Observations relevant to this Element demonstrate a central concern with the processes of learning.

Teaching strategies and materials reflect teachers' concerns with the special needs of disadvantaged students.

At the same time, teachers are aware of the power of literacy to enable students to change, to help find employment, to gain self-confidence. Therefore, teachers are not content to leave students in their 'comfort-zone' but see it as their role to challenge and extend, within the particular socio-cultural context of the group.

## 5.2
## Unit 2: Selection and Placement of Students

### Element 2.1 Interviews, assesses, places or refers students

The ABE teacher's role to interview, assess, place and/or refer students varies depending on context. In some instances, part-time teachers or teachers in larger TAFE colleges may not have this task. In some places, students are already assessed and placed by agencies such as CES, or an employer in workplace programs. In programs which rely on volunteer tutors, the

initial interview is used to match the student with a suitable tutor. Nevertheless, a basic tenet of ABE teaching is individual, initial assessment and an ABE practitioner should have the appropriate knowledge and skills.

Most teachers interview prospective students and consider the first encounter as an important bridge to overcoming anxieties and to discovering needs.

> *On arrival she was very nervous, and chatted a lot. She had been sick and crying at work prior to coming; terrified about going back to school. Her supervisor had been very supportive. I felt that my chief concern was to address her apprehensions, and get her to address her skill shortages without depressing her self-esteem any further.* (beginning literacy)

Teachers select from a variety of assessment tools and procedures, basing their judgements on the perceived needs of applicants, and the relevant policies of institutions. Teachers are well aware of available options and use the interview situation both to put students at ease and to model adult learning practices: negotiating placement and valuing students' prior knowledge and experience.

> *At the outset a learner profile is established containing the original assessment (from CES), interests, hobbies, educational background, disrupted schooling, any previous adult education courses, perceived short and long term goals—personal, educational, vocational—plus an individual skills assessment: samples of reading and writing. An individual interview once the student is placed in the group helps him feel at ease and negotiates a starting point, acknowledging perceived literacy needs and gives the student some power.* (Newstart unemployed youth)

Some teachers surveyed use formal diagnostic measures eg the global profile from South Australia and the Newstart trial assessment package. Other teachers use teacher-made tools or other available tools.

Students give a sample of their writing and are sometimes asked to fill in the enrolment form as a guide to literacy, or teachers use the newspaper and ask students to read. Some teachers use the interview process to model for the student how future lessons would proceed eg shared reading. Most teachers discuss with students why they want to enrol and lead into a discussion of short and long term goals.

> *If the student is referred by an employer, goals involve the employer and may influence the course (eg report writing).* (beginning literacy)

Many teachers speak of students having only vague or general ideas of what they want at the outset eg to improve, to learn to spell. Sometimes narrow, immediate goals are expressed eg read the canteen menu, and many teachers feel that as lessons progress

these goals can be widened to include concepts of critical literacy or reading and writing for enjoyment.

A strong theme running through all interviews and observable in all interactions, is the teacher's awareness of the students as individuals from particular cultures or backgrounds. This awareness is reflected in the variety of teaching strategies and materials and in the attributes of teachers already mentioned, namely sensitivity, patience and good-humour. Occasionally, students are aggressive and negative. Teachers try to be non-judgemental and well-informed about those experiences which cause the students' hostility. Skills in conflict-resolution and group dynamics are shown and teachers deflect difficult behaviour with humour and with genuine concern.

> *One NESB male student, from a tradition of male dominance, was angry and objectionable. The teacher had done a literacy/numeracy assessment and found that he was very bright...we talked to him, treated him with respect. His whole attitude changed when he realised that people could see that he was bright...Students are so angry that they are forced to attend (classes) but we show them in every possible way that we respect them...some are ex-offenders or substance abusers...self-esteem is crucial to learning...adults respond when you show them respect.* (SkillShare unemployed men)

> *As a co-ordinator, in the initial interview with the student, I found he was very reluctant and hesitant. As the interview progressed I found he couldn't read or write at all, he was unsure of the spelling of his own surname. He found it very difficult to sit in the room, was claustrophobic. He was very negative about learning and told me about his school experiences. He had been put in a corner, called a dummy, ridiculed by the teacher, put into a remedial class where he was ignored and left up the back of the room and told to just copy things down. He didn't think he could ever read or write—he had been told this. He thought that there was something major wrong with him and that he was wasting both our time. He had left school as soon as possible. I warmed to him and it was the start of a good relationship: I was non-threatening, reassuring and sympathetic. He wanted to learn to weld and we discussed the need the to read and write for the welding course. I gently eased him into realising that he needed to give reading and writing a go...We talked about taking risks, trying something new with the confidence that you will be able to do it. I spent a lot of time talking on this—I would have to change his attitudes before he would be able to become a successful student. We established a rapport and he started to trust me. I wrote 'weld, welding, welder' and played with the word. He learnt the words...he progressed and is an amazing success story.* (tutorial support)

Teachers display knowledge of other courses or agencies to which to refer students who may not suit the particular ABE program for which they were interviewed (eg AMES, vocational course counselling). They have procedures for recording and passing on these students appropriately.

**Element 2.2 In selecting students, requirements of government and organisation policies are balanced with the learning needs of individuals**

Teachers observed and interviewed are conscious of the needs of particular groups and work to meet these needs as well as balance them with the policies of institutions and organisations.

> **The teacher is aware that she has to earn students' trust, and interprets literacy in a broad sense, working to build self-esteem and a feeling of competence. She is aware of reasons why students may not come to class. She has an unhurried, relaxed approach and aims to find materials that are relevant to students. She is conscious of the inappropriateness of parts of the set course and uses her judgement about what and how to teach. (English Cert.)**

> *The administration insists that the teacher follows the guidelines for a program, but it doesn't work like that in a remote Aboriginal community: the teacher must be flexible and adapt to the community's needs. There was a large meeting and the people said "What is the point of training if there are no jobs?" They have a negative attitude to white education and see little reward for it in an area with 80% unemployment. Therefore I concentrate on enterprise development and fit the courses around them.* (mixed levels)

**Element 2.3 Uses a documentation system which records interviews and placement or referral outcomes to meet the government/organisation/student requirements**

In ABE the interview and critical assessment often include time to negotiate student goals and to begin to design a learning program. It is therefore the first part of Managing Learning Situations and Monitoring Student Learning. *The teaching learning process begins in the initial assessment.* Even though three units of competency have been differentiated here, it is always recognised that they form an integral whole. Teachers need to accommodate different audiences. They may often use a documentation system for their own teaching purposes as well as to make information available for the student and other teachers eg records of interview/initial assessment. Another complementary documentation system may be developed for or by an organisation/government. In all instances, confidentiality is seen by teachers as paramount. Examples of teachers' holistic approach to documentation can be found in Elements 4.3 and 5.2.

## 5.3
## Unit 3: Managing Learning Situations

**Element 3.1 Uses knowledge of curriculum theories and curriculum documents to develop and implement a program/ curriculum compatible with individual, group and program needs**

One of the major changes in the ABE learning situation is the increasing emphasis on and moves towards students doing subject/courses with a set curriculum rather than negotiating individual programs. This is especially so in workplace or work related situations.

> *In a workplace basic education class (there is) the need to interpret the broad educational and curriculum aims into meaningful activities for diverse needs. As a teacher I am*

*required to develop activities at different levels, for very different people who have different expectations, different starting points and different experiences.* (workplace)

However, negotiation with students remains important.

*Negotiation would be the way to go, so that the participants will have ownership of what they will do. You can negotiate even within a set curriculum.* (tutorial support)

Practitioners are competent in relating individual needs and goals to available and appropriate courses.

*The ABE teacher needs to be able to tune into the student's goals. It is not good enough to have a general philosophy of literacy, you need specific objectives for each student so that there is access to courses and modules to enable students to reach objectives.* (workplace)

The most important thing expressed in different ways by many teachers is that *it is important to help them at a level that works* and *the aim is to know where they are, otherwise they are set up for failure.*

Observation of a wide variety of sessions demonstrates evidence of planned learning activities based on knowledge and skills relevant to curriculum and program planning.

**Element 3.2 Manages time, space and resources to maximise educational outcomes**

Teachers across contexts state that they are very aware of the need to manage time, space and resources effectively. A teacher in a remote area who utilises the college courtyard for group discussion said: *It's like an oasis in the hot, dry, red country. It's a refuge from the sterile, air conditioned environs of the classroom.*

Teachers arrange spaces to enhance interaction and encourage group dynamics eg writers' workshop with desks in a circle.

*It was more interactive from the group's point of view...the physical arrangement of the room had an enormous effect.* (bridging course)

Teachers frequently work in confined or noisy environments, ignoring the surrounding distractions and keeping students focused on tasks with humour and patience. Sometimes teachers are required to bring their resources with them to the learning site and to be adaptable and flexible.

Teachers frequently need to adjust to unfamiliar workplace environments.

*At first I felt threatened, I had a lot to learn; the lab was new to me with all the jargon and formulae—it frightened me. But this was the only way to help; it was an urgent short-term problem...I felt on top of the world when we were on track because I had been at the end of my tether.* (workplace)

Constraints of time are often paramount; teachers show they are able to work within the constraints to achieve positive results.

*I have to build literacy into the trade course; I extend from specific numeracy to reading where possible but tutorial*

*support time is short and we have to stay fairly focused on the tasks. If I am in the trade classroom I use a lull in the lesson to focus on a reading or writing matter with a student.* (tutorial support)

As well as dealing with all of the above, ABE practitioners need to have the ability to choose and combine resources, methods of student interaction and curriculum content.

**In interview after the session, the teacher expresses concern about the content of the curriculum and questions its relevance; this is why she has tried to find real-life applications for what she has to teach. Team-teaching enables one-to-one tuition, and throughout the lesson both teachers have given positive encouragement and reassurance about the unfamiliar work. (Maths Cert.)**

**Element 3.3 Adapts curriculum in the light of changing circumstances and changing student needs**

Teachers express a readiness to modify the curriculum and change their approach to meet changes in students' needs, or new circumstances. Many chose a critical incident which featured a decision to divert from the set program, with significant learner outcomes.

*I had been trying for weeks to get the participants to contribute to the planning of the class by isolating what reading and writing activities they would like to do in the class. The usual response: "you're the teacher, you know best". I suggested they might like to look in their local newspaper for articles they would like to share with others...Weeks after my initial request, G arrived beaming with an article she found on the History of Easter in the P... Community News. I immediately threw my original lesson plan out the window. I read the articles aloud as they followed. Discussion ensued. The group was very lively and enthusiastic. This led to a discussion of what Easter meant to them. People discussed in pairs then we had a class discussion where I built up the vocabulary on the board. The group then wrote what Easter meant to them. What was exciting about all this was I received the best writing I ever had from the group. It was also the liveliest discussion they'd ever had. The key reason was that G had tapped into an article that was of interest to them all—I would never had chosen it...my ability to throw out my plan and develop a lesson on my feet was crucial. It was also the beginning of students bringing material and taking some responsibility for the content of the class. I'm now inundated with articles from the people! I think it is very important...to be able to provide content that harnesses the energy of the group and that the group takes some responsibility for this.* (NESB women's literacy)

Another teacher described a situation in her basic workskills class where a student with psychiatric problems disrupted the lesson. The teacher abandoned the work she had prepared and led the group in trying to settle the difficulties. Afterwards the teacher consulted the counsellor about how to deal with such situations and other teachers who taught the class joined as a

team. The incident made this teacher aware of her own limitations and the need to be more holistic in her approach to meet students' needs.

> *(it) captures the quintessence of ABE teaching—people who are in crisis, under stress, undergoing change are the clients we have to confidently deal with each day. (This is) typical, a cross-section of people (who) often are very needy.* (basic workskills)

Observations show the teacher having to change plans for the lesson when some students can't attend and working with those students who have come, each at their own tasks based on their progress eg a country teacher with an Aboriginal group meets in a community hall and she takes all the materials she can with her, ready to adapt depending on who comes to the class. She has a range of alternative activities ready to extend any task if she thinks the students need it, or if they should ask for more. Similarly, a teacher in a workplace situation with hearing impaired students also has a range of tasks and activities ready so that she can constantly modify the course of the lesson in reaction to students' understanding.

## 5.4
## Unit 4: Monitoring Learning

**Element 4.1 Uses knowledge of current theories of language, mathematics and learning to select and evaluate appropriate assessment methods**

In beginning literacy and numeracy classes, assessment is seen to be informal and ongoing, involving the student in making comments on progress and on areas still in need of work. Success in daily activities, such as a cloze task or a maths problem, is recorded by the student and/or teacher to keep a current record of progress.

Teachers keep records of student progress—anecdotes, samples of work, results of tasks. Students are frequently asked to write comments on their own progress in relation to the goals that they had originally stated or in relation to course objectives. Teachers are aware of the need to relate assessment to these goals and objectives so that students gain confidence from their achievements. Goals might be re-negotiated if necessary. Most teachers look for learning outcomes which are measured by comparing what a student could do initially with present competencies. Increasingly, however, teachers need to assess more formally in accredited courses.

In courses with a set curriculum teachers sometimes assess students on tasks related to the course as preparation for exams. Teachers are realistic about such exams:

> *If a student doesn't pass, it doesn't mean he hasn't learnt anything; if a lot fail there is maybe something wrong with the assessment techniques.* (Maths Cert.)

This has happened in contexts where students were assessed by the CES or other agencies prior to enrolling and either the initial assessment was inadequate or the students were placed in special CES-funded courses which were inappropriate.

Often though,

> *students' progress is measured in terms of goals eg to apply for a job, to go to an interview without an interpreter; and their readiness to move on.* (NESB SkillShare)

Teachers are aware that many students have had poor school experiences and therefore do not wish to be constantly tested and measured.

> **The teacher believes it is vital to remove a sense of testing and failure and to build self esteem. Knowledge has been built up of students' backgrounds and difficulties in the school system—most left school by year 10. (unemployed men—vocational)**

The scope of informal assessing is wide, and many teachers have considerable knowledge about their students' backgrounds and problems, that guide them in the provision of programs and in selection of assessment procedures and tools. They also take such factors into account when deciding if a student has made sufficient progress.

> *Students feel that they are achieving something. It is really important to concentrate on what they can do and boost esteem by using their strengths.* (workplace)

Most descriptors of assessment are based on language and maths tasks in real contexts relevant to the adult learner. Even though practitioners do not often articulate or name theories on which their procedures or tasks are based, it is clear that social context, learning development and literacy/numeracy development are central to assessment decisions.

Where external assessment in the form of exams or other assessment instruments are beyond the control of the individual teachers, the progression towards sitting the exam or equivalent is monitored by assessment philosophies and procedures as outlined above.

Assessment is also increasingly dictated by employer needs eg for teachers in workplace contexts, assessment may mean ensuring that the student meets the goals of the employer through practice in required tasks or it may involve more generic goals such as problem-solving, where assessment of progress is obtained by feedback from supervisors.

> *We have a framework of competencies for awards. I give comments. Part of my role is to educate others (supervisors, the union) about literacy, that it is about more than reading and writing; that there are broad outcomes—it takes a while for them to understand but I feel that it is my major role.* (workplace)

These last comments indicate a wider role for the ABE practitioner based on theories of literacy and learning and stemming from externally-based assessment requirements.

**Element 4.2 Modifies students' programs as a result of continual monitoring**

Whether the ongoing assessment is formal or informal, ABE teachers show flexibility in changing a student's program as the need arises and by responding to individual students' programming needs within a class.

> **Sometimes work is tested as a refresher of the lesson and the students choose if it is to be done as a test. Results are not used, they just give an idea of progress and this is discussed with students. This teacher frequently asks students for feedback *"Is it what you want? More? Less?"* and explains what she is doing and why, adjusting the lesson as students' needs emerge. (developing reading)**

Most students observed have personal folders for their work which the teacher refers to for individual tasks and where the students keep a collection of their work. Teachers respond to students' progress by setting particular work for them eg for the more experienced student, or for the one with particular difficulties.

Where students are not in the class for the same length of time, one teacher has devised a spiral form of assessment where she is able to plot individual progress.

> *Rarely do all the students begin in class at the same time so it is a spiral of different levels, adapting the modules to each student's level. Record keeping is important.* (beginning literacy/numeracy)

Results are reported to the supervisor and institution, but this teacher measures the real success of her teaching by the fact that students use their skills in jobs after the course.

**Element 4.3 Documents students' progress in ways meaningful to students' supervisors and those to whom there is a reporting requirement**

If the process of negotiation between learners and teachers is central to placement, design of a program and on-going learning, then documenting and reporting progress will be an integral part of this process too, as far as learners and teachers are concerned.

However, where teachers are responsible to external authorities for reporting student progress they are understandably concerned about balancing confidentiality and accountability. Teachers indicate that *results are reported to the supervisor and the institution* or *we have a framework of competencies for awards. I give comments.* However, these comments are expressed in broad terms. Sometimes, too, *the final report to the management has no names to ensure confidentiality,* while the teacher (who has the support and understanding of the training managers) shows the training managers more detailed evidence of students' progress and stresses that each 'topic' is assessed more informally.

Teachers speak of good relationships with local CES officers and employers, and instances where they have been able to explain the nature of literacy/numeracy programs/assessment, so that the authority or employer does not expect quantified results.

A teacher recounts an incident relating to an employee/student and employer which brings together a variety of issues relevant to reporting and accountability.

> *There was a request from his immediate supervisor for information about his reading/writing skills. The enquiry was made in an ethical way; the employer told the student he would like to talk to the teacher, then he rang. I was very cautious and felt the need to protect the student. Confidentiality is important; there should be no need to tell lies either. I explained to the supervisor the place of testing in literacy and the need to increase the student's confidence. I persuaded him into talking to the student in a non-threatening way as the problem was whether the student had enough skills for the job.*
>
> *Then I planned a series of four reading/writing tasks for the student that he could do well for his clerical job (telephone enquiry; letter to read and understand; letter needing short reply; read job application—he chose also to read orally from the local newspaper). The student had feedback on what he could do, then I wrote a letter explaining how well he performed these tasks.*
>
> *The result was that he got the desk job. This was a key dilemma whether to provide information on a student to an employer about literacy skills.* (vocational 1:1)

Confidentiality about attendance too is of real concern to some students eg in the workplace or prison context, apart from the confidentiality of a student's progress.

> *Confidentiality comes from the teacher's ability to negotiate at the outset: this is a skill teachers need. Industry may be ignorant about literacy and it has to trust the teacher—this comes from the level of the teacher's confidence in the negotiations, whether employers will take the risk. At the supervisor level, the teacher has to help them understand about literacy or they feel threatened, or worried about maintaining productivity. The teacher's job is to get the students to come.* (workplace)

**Element 4.4 Continually reflects on and adjusts own practice**

Every teacher interviewed spends time reflecting on practice. Many would like more time for it, and not every teacher writes down reflections. Reflection is used to make decisions about tasks and directions for individual students and for classes. Often teachers adjust their practice in the light of this reflection. When lessons go well, or do not go as planned, they decide on the next course of action through reflection. Many speak of the value of learning from what happens in class. Teachers in team-teaching partnerships confer and reflect together.

Incidents include immediate reflections resulting from particular situations such as: When a student who wanted to do a child care course that required field work asked if she should see the Horticulture Department about it, the teacher *was floored, left speechless. I was disappointed in myself that I had been so glib as to*

*assume that this student...would automatically understand the jargon...(It was) a reminder for me: literacy is two steps forward one step back—take nothing for granted.* (basic workskills)

In a lesson with NESB women, the teacher asked them to draw an outline of the map of their country of origin to talk about it.

> *As the women spoke of their histories a new quality of expression came into their English. Language flow—information and emphasis—was suddenly improved. More than this, I suddenly saw them as people, much more than before when I had 'controlled' them as students. As they spoke, my desire to correct their syntax diminished because it was irrelevant to understanding. I saw the value of their backgrounds and of leaving things alone.* (NESB women)

A teacher who had had difficulties with young unemployed men in a group was able to channel their interest and 'win them over'. In doing so she reflected: *I learnt a lot about my reaction to young men and realised that often it is insecurity and inability to ask questions about subjects that they fear, that fuels their behaviour.* (beginning literacy/numeracy)

Consultation with students is stressed as an essential part of reflection. This is often coupled with teachers' commitment to developing self-assessment.

> **Self-assessment is important and is discussed with the teacher, and programs modified if necessary. For example, one teacher plots student progress on a wall-chart for a certificate computer class so that as tasks are assessed, students see their progress as mastery of skills. (Aboriginal Women Cert.)**
>
> **In a research task, students had taken the initiative and challenged the teacher on how to assess: usually they negotiated weekly activities reflecting the term's goals, but for this session of group work the class drew up criteria, to add to the teacher's assessment of their speaking and listening. (assisted independent learning)**

This kind of student involvement in monitoring their own learning to the extent of challenging the teacher's ideas, and the teacher's response to this as appropriate, demonstrates constructive, critical self-reflection.

## 5.5 Unit 5: Evaluation of Programs

**Element 5.1 Examines existing models of evaluation to adopt and incorporate appropriate evaluation strategies, and uses the evaluation of courses for revision, planning and development**

Practitioners' responses for this unit highlight some confusion between assessment and evaluation. In the data, the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably by the same teacher. This has made it difficult to select particular contexts.

It is also the case that evaluation of programs is not the domain of part-time teachers or some full time teachers in large ABE sections or departments. As workplace and work related provision increases, evaluation is becoming more accepted and more formal. Consequently, a greater number of teachers will be involved and this will necessitate acquiring knowledge about models of evaluation and evaluation strategies.

Even though practitioners did not speak about models of evaluation specifically, they did sometimes indicate that they evaluated in some way, either all the way through a course or only at the end. They also described how they used one evaluation strategy rather than another.

Responses are quite brief and many teachers cite students completing the course or returning to the course as positive evaluations.

> *Evaluation is mainly through course completion.* (numeracy)

> *Whether the students' return is the final evaluation.* (mixed levels)

Other indicators of positive evaluation are students' articulation into further courses.

> *When a student has developed the skills...they will... progress to the second level.* (NESB men)

Often the process of evaluation involves asking the students if the course had met their goals.

> *The final evaluation is an accumulation of regular one-to-one feedback sessions throughout the course giving students a view of their progress. There is a standard college evaluation sheet at the end of the course, plus the teacher's evaluation compared to the goals.* (beginning literacy)

In some cases there is consultation among teachers, management and students regarding students' progress and evaluation—a model of good practice.

> *The teacher writes a report at the end—the teacher's assessment is incorporated in a regular management team meeting. There is no formal evaluation but students' evaluations during, and at the end of the course, are taken into account. They also come to some management meetings to make the process as up front as possible: students are told at each stage if there are changes and are given feedback.* (beginning literacy)

**Element 5.2 Reports to relevant authorities on program effectiveness**

Reporting to authorities regarding the effectiveness of programs is linked closely to documenting students' programs for supervisors and others (see Element 4.3). It is the case that some organisations and employers believe high or satisfactory assessments of students is the principal or only evaluation evidence.

When practitioners state that *reports go to line managers and up to the director* (beginning literacy) they often explain that 'reports' include information about students' assessment as well as information and analysis of the course in a wider sense. As with Element 5.1, it has been difficult to clearly separate the two here. Thus, some comments may have appeared in earlier units.

Reports may be to the workplace.

> *I have to report to the company but not on individuals only the group; the policy is confidentiality. We have a framework of competencies for awards, I give comments. Part of my role is to educate others about literacy eg the supervisors, the union, that it is about more than reading and writing, that there are broad outcomes. It takes a while for them to understand but I feel it is my major role.* (workplace)

or to the CES and the workplace.

> *We were accountable to the CES at the end of the semester, and reported on each student with an overall comment. The course was rewritten at intervals requiring more liaison and CES input. I had to educate the CES about literacy, the students' progress was obvious and they had more confidence, the CES could see it: 'no trouble with the women now, they can fill in the forms now'.* (workplace)

or to an institution (eg prison) and TAFE college.

> *They do tests all the way through at the end of a module. There are different levels of the module operating at different times that a student can repeat. The teacher reports results of all modules to the college, and is accountable to the co-ordinator of all the prison's educators, like the Principal in a school, then reports at the end of semester to the college.* (beginning literacy / numeracy)

or to everyone.

> *There is a formal evaluation at the end of the course, twice a year. Student assessment of the course is part of this, plus an ongoing informal assessment. It is an isolating job—I operate on my own. I report in short summaries to the funding bodies in terms of goals, not reports on individual students. I have to re-apply for funding every 6-12 months, and accountability is very strict—worked out in numbers of hours rather than on quality issues, which I think is the wrong emphasis. I also have to report to the authority whose premises I use, and my Steering Committee.* (community co-ordinator)

Reporting on programs—assessment and evaluation reports—is compulsory in CES-related, workplace and Certificate courses. As the examples above show, teachers' roles are widening as courses (and indeed programs) are no longer left to an individual teacher's discretion. The reporting may determine the viability and continuation of the course and teachers need more help and knowledge in this area.

## 5.6 Unit 6: Community Communication and Consultation

**Element 6.1 Raises awareness, consults and negotiates with a range of government/industrial/ community organisations on issues relevant to ABE provision**

Many teachers see it as a part of their role to raise awareness of literacy issues. Part-time or sessional teachers may not have this as part of their role. Involvement varies: teachers in community contexts like neighbourhood houses and libraries need to write submissions for funding, and to liaise with their management committees from the local area. Teachers in TAFE also write submissions for funding, and teachers in workplace contexts negotiate with managements for access to students and for understanding of their literacy programs. Many teachers involved in programs with the CES have found it essential to liaise with their local CES.

Teachers interviewed speak of giving awareness sessions to community groups such as Rotary. One teacher was able to set up an ABE section in her college through lobbying and fund-raising in the local community. Other ABE teachers speak regularly to community groups to encourage members to become volunteer literacy tutors.

Teachers communicating and consulting in the community include a teacher working closely with an Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory who found it essential to liaise with that community.

> *the teacher must be flexible and adapt to the community's needs: a large meeting was held to discuss future plans. The people said what is the point of training if there are no jobs? Therefore I have fitted the TAFE courses around them.*

Another in the workplace found she had to raise awareness amongst a range of people there.

> *...part of my role is to educate others about literacy, eg the supervisors, the union, that it is about more than reading and writing, that there are broad outcomes. It takes a while for them to understand but I feel it is my major role.*

**Element 6.2 Represents ABE both within the teachers' workplace and in the wider community**

Many teachers have the role of representing ABE within their institutions. Part-time and sessional teachers often do not have this role. One teacher speaks of the need to inform other TAFE teachers about ABE issues and student needs: through team-teaching, informal contact or acting as a 'go-between' if the student has a problem with a trade teacher.

> *I believe in keeping a high profile within the college for the ABE unit: a high standard—it is important to keep on good relations with the trades and be seen to be useful.* (trade support)

> *An ABE teacher needs to know what is going on in the college, about other courses, for example trade certificates...Teachers in ABE get involved with their students to a greater extent than other teachers; if the*

*student feels comfortable with the teacher, it means you are listening...the student has chosen you to talk to.* (drop-in literacy centre)

There is variation in how much involvement the teachers believe is appropriate: teachers are not counsellors, yet are often thrust into the role. They certainly become advocates for individual students as well as for literacy and numeracy. Some teachers strongly represent their students' interests.

*I do a lot of jumping up and down on behalf of students—eg defending one-to-one provision—I know when one-to-one is best—it may be the important first step.* (beginning literacy)

Similarly a teacher team-teaching with trade teachers believes that she represents the students.

*We have informal meetings with all the teachers who teach a student plus a Tutorial Support morning for Head Teachers of each section to evaluate tutorial support. Sometimes I report back to the trade teachers—confidentiality is really important—it's usually verbal feedback to the teacher on ongoing progress. In the past I was able to work well with one receptive trade teacher so that we prepared lessons together and each lesson was team-teaching, and all the students in the group benefited, not just the student needing literacy skills. We even prepared a group assessment task and it was a big inroad. But this system depends on timetabling contingencies.* (trade support)

Some teachers are involved in planning and developing professional development sessions in colleges with teachers from different fields.

**Element 6.3 Plans and implements ABE programs**

There are many examples of teachers working with other providers to plan an ABE program. In workplace situations this is most apparent. Many plan once they know their students' needs and the needs of the organisation to which they are accountable. Some teachers prepare programs in liaison with the CES management eg a teacher has prepared a vocational literacy and numeracy program for a Hardware Skills course, and another has prepared a course for cleaners through liasion with CES. Teachers may develop programs in conjunction with trade teachers in TAFE colleges. Examples given for previous units demonstrate teachers' accountability to organisations, as well as teachers devising programs to meet the needs of their students.

## 5.7 Unit 7: Professional Development and Training

**Element 7.1 Is informed about current issues, policies and theoretical debates in the field of ABE**

Policies and debates are discussed more frequently by practitioners who have coordinating or management roles. But there is a considerable number of teachers who recognise that their practice is being affected and often driven by current government policies. Many of these teachers are now involved

in seeking funding, becoming advocates, becoming more entrepreneurial and/or involved with the CES and other agencies and workplaces.

There is a particular awareness of political influences on ABE in inner city, Aboriginal contexts. Problems relating to isolation, lack of trained teachers and lack of resources concerned many teachers in remote areas.

Education for disadvantaged groups such as unemployed youth, the physically and intellectually impaired, and the hearing impaired is highlighted, as is the difficulty of being thrust into literacy in the workplace programs. Lack of sustained professional development across these areas causes some confusion and anxiety for teachers.

Teachers' comments regarding reporting to CES and employers on students and courses reflect their involvement in issues beyond literacy and numeracy in the classroom to working with current policies and satisfying funding authorities.

> *SIP has meant a lot of paper work and a real change for us...it is difficult as we have to deal with people who have to come to the classes to get their money. We have a philosophy to help them to get the best from the situation to achieve independence and to have more say in what they are going to do. ...everyday, someone makes some change, there are real attitude problems.* (workplace)

Other teachers speak of the same difficulties.

> *Students are so angry that they are being forced to attend—but we show them in every possible way that we respect them.* (SkillShare)

Comments like this are a useful summary, expressing why the ABE teacher needs to be informed.

> *An ABE teacher needs to know what is going on in the college...and general information: this is broader than the classroom, knowing the hidden curriculum, skills on how to get by, government regulations, access, social security etc. Language gives everybody access and students need to learn not to be frightened by it: it is the most complex human activity and they have a right to be able to use the tool as well as possible: it is empowering, enabling.* (drop-in literacy centre)

Teachers outline a variety of ways of accessing current information to keep up with issues and debates, the most common of which are informal networks and publications from professional bodies.

**Element 7.2 Is actively involved in continuing professional development in the field of ABE, and**
**Element 7.3 Makes a contribution to the field of ABE**

Experienced teachers attend conferences and seminars when possible and many mention wanting to do further study in the field. These teachers frequently give professional development workshops for their peers and may be involved in projects and other activities related to ABE.

Teachers in isolated areas are very much aware of difficulties in accessing professional development and take advantage of an opportunity when it presents.

Less experienced (and some part-time) teachers do not give presentations but attend self-funded seminars, conferences and workshops for their own professional development when possible.

All teachers place great value on informal networks of practitioners and say they learn a lot from others. They are also willing to share resources and ideas.

A high proportion of teachers observed and interviewed belong to professional associations, some as office bearers. They read professional publications and some contribute to these.

Professional development activities are integral to critical reflection. This is summarised by one teacher as *we 'Dorothy Dix' each other* and by another as *the hallmark of ABE teachers is that they ask more questions than they get answers.*

**Element 7.4 Maximises the contribution of volunteers to the field of ABE**

Some practitioners train volunteer tutors in programs designed to educate them in good practice in ABE. The only full-time teacher in one college trains the volunteer tutors as well as acting as a spokesperson for ABE in the community, recruiting volunteers for programs. Such programs aim to train tutors in good practice and model such practices in training sessions. The practitioners monitor and support tutors, matching them with students in 1:1 situations.

> *I co-ordinate tutors...Sometimes a student may not be placed in a group...I gauge their ability and needs and place them with a tutor. This is followed up at 4-5 weeks with a talk to the tutor and the student. Regular notes are kept of tutor meetings and there is a formal evaluation at the end of the year.* (community co-ordinator)

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**This chapter has highlighted just some examples of Critical Incidents, Observations and Interviews which were gathered to validate the competencies. Samples of more complete Critical Incident and Observation data can be found in Appendices D and F, while Appendices C and E outline the questions that teachers were asked.**

**The data gathered for the project proved rich and enlightening as teachers freely described their experiences.**

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## CONCLUSION

Attempting to define and explain competence in the Adult Basic Education profession has, understandably, been complex yet it has also been rewarding. During the course of the project the researchers presented papers and spoke about the work in progress at a number of conferences and other forums across the states. These presentations prompted lively discussions among participants which always included amazement followed by satisfaction on hearing and then seeing the breadth and depth of the work of an ABE practitioner. Being able to articulate the breadth and depth of the Adult Basic Education practitioner's work is essential for both the individual and the profession. That this has been done in competency-based terms in this report should be seen positively as a basis for reflecting on personal career paths as well as on where the profession itself is headed in the 1990s.

Analysis of the Critical Incidents, Observations, Interviews and discussions has yielded a wealth of information. A summary of this information on best practice follows:

> **ABE teachers continually stress the philosophy that each student's needs has to be addressed for learning to take place. Their concerns largely are for the students and lesson management: the relevance of content to students' goals, both short and long term. Consequently, group dynamics becomes very important. Highlighting success to build self-esteem, using enjoyment of the learning task and good humour to keep things rolling are aspects of good practice. Acting as a facilitator not a figure of authority is important to many teachers, who wish to be accepted and respected as part of the group. Nevertheless, a firm control is in evidence as the teacher focuses on learning: in charge but not bossy. Teachers use their judgement when to follow up on a digression and when to bring discussion back to a task. A variety of tasks was observed, most with a focus on student-centred learning eg discovery or problem-solving. Tasks are negotiated initially and frequently reviewed, and for many teachers, the success of their program is measured in terms of individual student outcome (job, interview, more sociable behaviour, more confidence etc) or by a comparison of goals with tasks achieved. Many teachers are anxious to break students' stereotypes of teacher-learner which may have caused distress at school. Teachers frequently listen to their students' problems, helping or referring them to get help elsewhere. They model mutual respect and try to break down sexist or racist views. They try to move their students towards independence and support them in risk-taking. They use humour and friendliness to reassure the anxious and deflect the frustration of the angry.**

**Teachers are conscientious in record keeping and reporting, ensuring students' confidentiality. They frequently need to explain their programs and aims to others, such as employers, government instrumentalities, community organisations and other TAFE teachers, on behalf of their students. They also often have to write submissions for funding and resources, and teachers in remote places often have to manage with few resources and few opportunities for professional development.**

**Most teachers are willing to find out more about their profession, and many rely on informal networking with other teachers. Many read professional publications, belong to professional associations, attend workshops or conferences when possible, and some contribute to these. Some want further training.**

**Common attributes identifiable in all teachers interviewed and observed are their commitment to their students and their dedication to their work.**

Adult Basic Education practitioners combine knowledge of theories (of learning, language, mathematics and curriculum), resources, socio-political issues, skills and strategies (of learning teaching, critical reflection, collaboration, negotiation, conflict resolution), and attributes (of flexibility, sense of humour, supportiveness, patience, sensitivity, respect, commitment) to carry out their numerous roles in a diverse range of contexts.

Bringing together descriptions of the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes for the profession as a whole, however refined they become, should enable the development of competency descriptions for different contexts within Adult Basic Education.

The profession can use this document to work towards national standards and registration, at the same time as it is useful in influencing teacher education course design and review, job descriptions and professional development decisions.

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# Appendix A

## Competency standards

One of the policy areas in which the Federal Government has been very active over the past four or five years has been the reform of vocational education and industrial training. The overall aim of this policy has been the creation of a workforce which is efficient and sufficiently productive to play a part in helping the economy to become internationally competitive. It has been argued by Governments, unions and employers for some years, that certain elements of Australia's vocational education and training system militate against the fulfilment of this policy. Some of the major problems identified include:

- Inconsistencies in training and formal vocational education arrangements between Australian States. Such inconsistencies have impeded labour market efficiency and career path development for the workforce
- The difficulty of having studies undertaken informally, or skills developed on the job or overseas, recognised by educational institutions
- The granting of trade and similar qualifications based on length of time served rather than capacity to undertake the work required.

In attempting to solve these problems, the Commonwealth and State Governments have initiated a number of policies recently. What is unique about these policies is the bringing together of educational, employment and industrial relations reforms. The policies attempt to change obsolete work practices, to provide incentives for workers to develop skills, and to ensure that the skills being developed through TAFE and other off- and on-the-job training mechanisms are those actually needed in industry. The workplace reforms have been widely discussed and include award restructuring, reduction in numbers of job classifications, multiskilling, and job redesign. Less widely understood is the nature of the policies designed to improve the skill levels of the workforce, in particular the quality of these skills. The kernel of this policy is the promotion of national competency standards for all occupations in Australia. It is envisaged by Commonwealth and State governments that these standards will form the basis of all the other components of the training and vocational education system: curriculum development, delivery and assessment of training, and occupational certification.

## What are competency standards?

National competency standards define the competencies required for effective performance in employment. A competency comprises the specification of knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill within an occupation or industry level to the standard of performance required in employment.

As defined in the National Training Board's Policy and Guidelines document (National Training Board 1992), the concept of competency focuses on what is expected of an employee in the workplace rather than on the learning process;

it embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments. This is a broad concept of competency in that all aspects of work performance, and not only narrow task skills, are included.

**The concept of competency encompasses:**

1. **the requirement to perform individual tasks (task skills)**
2. **the requirement to manage a number of different tasks within the job (task management skills)**
3. **the requirement to respond to irregularities and breakdowns in routine (contingency management skills)**
4. **the requirement to deal with the responsibilities and expectations of the work environment (job/role environment skills).**

In order to achieve the broad competencies required in the workplace, a valid set of standards must address each of these four points.

Moreover, the broad concept of competency should be:

- related to realistic workplace practices
- expressed as an outcome
- understandable to trainers, supervisors and potential employees.

**Advantages and uses of competencies**

Competency standards of the kind defined in the previous section offer many challenges and opportunities for occupations. In addition to underpinning workplace reform, other uses of competency standards include the maintainance of industry and occupational standards and increasing labour market efficiency and equity, particularly during periods of labour market shortages. Competency standards offer a fairer method for testing overseas qualifications and also facilitate the partial recognition of those who attempt, but fail to obtain, full qualifications. In addition, competency standards can enhance career progression by providing a valid basis for promotion. They also enable artificial barriers between occupational levels to be removed.

Competency standards are seen by government as the vehicle for achieving national consistency of industry and occupational qualifications. The 1989 policy statement on improving recognition of migrant skills (Dawkins, 1989) proposed a reform agenda centred on the development of national competency standards. Acceptance of nationally agreed competencies, covering all entry requirements, and with specified performance standards and appropriate assessment methodologies, will ensure:

- Consistent recognition across States and Territories
- Accreditation by all States and Territories of applicants (both domestic and overseas-trained) meeting those standards

- An open and equitable assessment of those with overseas education and work experience against agreed performance standards.

Competency standards also offer a powerful basis for improving the courses that prepare people for entry to the occupation. The performance of graduates of a course against the competency standards will quickly provide data about the quality of the course. Specifically, the competency standards will provide detailed guidance on the course's content, delivery and assessment.

**Implementation of competency-based standards in Australia: Nature and aims of the NTB**

The NTB is a public company, limited by guarantee, with its owner members being the Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers responsible for vocational education and training. The reason for the establishment of the NTB centres on the belief, held by the Commonwealth and State governments, that inconsistencies in the vocational education and training system, discussed earlier, have impaired the development of national skills levels. The inconsistencies have discouraged people from moving across and even within States, since their skills and qualifications are not always recognised. When this is combined with the the lack of career paths in many occupations there is obviously little incentive for individuals to develop skills and remain in that occupation. The consequence is that Australia has an underskilled workforce, which is one reason for the overall lack of competitiveness of the economy. It is these perceived problems that the NTB seeks to address.

The aims of the NTB are to set up a framework for encouraging the development of industry and occupational standards and to endorse such standards as they are developed by particular industries. Such standards have the potential to overcome the already noted inconsistencies in the vocational training system and, in association with industrial awards, provide a framework for career progression within an occupation. It is important to note that professional bodies, trade associations and the like will develop the competency-based standards for their occupation. They will not be determined by government bureaucrats. Once competency standards are established in consultation and co-operation with an occupational group, the NTB sees them becoming the benchmark for curriculum development, assessment, training delivery, accreditation and individual certification in the Australian vocational education and training system.

**The methods and procedures of the NTB**

The major work of the NTB to date has been the setting up of an Australian Standards Framework. The aim of the framework is to develop a set of reference points, which link formal qualifications and skills developed on the job, with occupations and occupational classifications as defined by awards. **The link is established by a set of broad competency levels over the entire labour market.** The NTB has described eight levels, from competent operative or service sector worker at the lowest level (level one) to competent senior professional or manager at the highest level (level eight).

Each industry will differ in the range of levels it covers. Industry X may start at level one and finish at level four (advanced skilled autonomous worker); industry Y may cover the whole eight levels; industry Z may cover only levels six seven and eight, which describe professional work. Within this range industrial awards may create any number of classifications as appropriate, eg in industry X, within its four levels, there may be eight classifications, two for each level. So the NTB levels will help industries to develop a sensible career path which will be reflected in the classifications.

The aim of the framework is to enable any industry to develop a set of standards which describe the competencies needed to perform adequately at the various occupational levels, whether this be at levels one to four as in industry X or six to eight as in industry Z.

The link between occupational levels and vocational qualifications and/or skills developed on the job, is through the described standards. Thus in industry X, competencies for level one generally would be developed on the job. At level four the competencies would usually be developed through a post-trade certificate or equivalent. The standards would guide both on-the-job training and formal courses, so that the competencies developed in the worker would be those described in the standards.

**The national competencies format**

National competency standards will be used by a broad cross section of the Australian community. It is therefore appropriate, in the interests of consistency and comprehension that national standards be expressed in a particular format. This section specifies the required content and format of national standards (National Training Board, 1991) through a series of examples. The starting point is the concept of competency. Units of competency are illustrated followed by their associated Elements and Performance Criteria. Finally, a Range of Variables may be incorporated in the standards.

**A standard at any level is expressed in units of competency, each of which then comprises two parts:**
**1 Elements of competency and**
**2 their associated Performance Criteria.**

**Unit of competency**

A Unit of competency is a discrete product or output, that is, a grouping of activities within an occupation.

Two examples of *Units* from the ABE competency standards are:

**Unit of Competency: Selection and Placement of Students**
**Unit of Competency: Community Communication and Consultation**

**Elements of competency**

Elements of competency are the basic building blocks of the system as a whole and of the Unit of competency and, as such, continue the description of the key purpose of the unit itself. They describe, in output terms, things that an employee who works in a particular area is able to do, that is, an action or outcome that is demonstrable and assessable. Elements of competency, in relation to Units, describe the lowest logical, identifiable and discrete subgrouping of actions and knowledge which contribute to and build a **Unit**.

The following examples show the breakdown of the Unit of competency **Selection and Placement of Students** into Elements of competency in the ABE competency standards:

**UNIT: Selection and Placement of Students**
**Profession: Adult Basic Education**
**Element**
Interviews, assesses, places or refers students
**Element**
In selecting students, requirements of government and organisation policies are balanced with the learning needs of individuals
**Element**
Uses a documentation system which records interviews and placement or referral outcomes to meet the government/organisational/student requirements.

**Performance Criteria**

The next stage in the development of standards is the specification of Performance Criteria. Performance Criteria are statements which:

- enable judgement of the performance specified in the elements of competency to a level acceptable in employment
- specify the required level of performance of Elements ie **the evidence**
- indicate the **evidence** which is required for competency in a particular Element to be inferred

In other words, Performance Criteria are evaluative statements which specify the required level of performance.

In deriving the Performance Criteria from the elements, the developer should firstly define the evidence required to identify competency and be aware of the methods through which evidence may be obtained. Evidence may be collected through observation of performance, through computer or paper-based assessment processes or through simulation. The actual method chosen will need to be appropriate to the information sought and the setting in which assessment may be logically, safely and economically conducted.

**Performance Criteria provide a *guide* to assessment, but do not as such constitute an assessment document.**

In some cases Performance Criteria will need to be explicit, while in others they may be simple bridging statements which refer to standards which are already clearly documented in an industry regulation, publication or other repository.

**The principle is that the Performance Criteria provide a satisfactory link between the competency and the required evidence of achievement.**

This is essential not only in terms of the competency standards but also in relation to the subsequent assessment and delivery of training programs. Below are provided examples extending the Units and Elements previously shown into the Performance Criteria stage.

**Unit: Selection and placement of students**
**Profession: Adult Basic Education**

| Element | Performance Criteria |
|---|---|
| In selecting students, requirements of government and organisation policies are balanced with the learning needs of individuals | Learning needs of individuals are viewed within the context of prevailing policies and practices. Teachers make decisions which attempt to satisfy the needs of both government policies/organisations as well as individuals. Where necessary teachers may challenge the system in order to meet student needs. |

**Cues**

Cues are specific examples of evidence which illuminate Performance Criteria. They are not themselves mandatory criteria but can be used as a guide to the sorts of evidence which are part of the Performance Criteria.

**Unit: Selection and placement of students**
**Profession: Adult Basic Education**

| Element | Performance Criteria | Cues |
|---|---|---|
| In selecting students, requirements of government and organisation policies are balanced with the learning needs of individuals | Learning needs of individuals are viewed within the context of prevailing policies and practices. Teachers make decisions which attempt to satisfy the needs of both government policies/organisations as well as individuals. Where necessary teachers may challenge the system in order to meet student needs. | Explains reasons for placement and referral to outside agencies where appropriate. Explains why specific programs are available. |

**Range of Variables statement**

In order to ensure that portability, mobility and credit transfers are achieved, competencies (that is the Unit, Element and Performance Criteria) should remain general.

**The Range of Variables statement should be used to describe specific factors which are applicable in different work sites and environments.**

They describe specific factors which affect the Performance Criteria ie contexts and conditions to which the criteria apply. Examples of items to be included here are the range and types of technical equipment, processes and procedures, likely client groups and other environmental factors. Because the Range of Variables statement allows specificity to be identified, it forms the basis for the recognition/identification of:

- underpinning knowledge and skills
- content of training programs
- assessment processes/documents
- other human resource development functions including selection, appraisal, job design etc

Range of Variables statements represent a further stage into the development of competency standards. This stage would include a range of variables statement which spells out the range of contexts and conditions to which the Performance Criteria apply.

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**In this project the variety of contexts was so varied that they were not specifically addressed in Range of Variables statements. In particular contexts, these standards would form the basis for developing relevant competencies and a Range of Variables statement would then be included.**

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## Appendix B

**Workshop Participants**
**Biographical information as at June 1992**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Susan Arber** | Adult Literacy Office and Learning Centre Manager, Redland Community College, Queensland. Susan has had extensive experience teaching and managing literacy programs including ESL; Technical and Workplace literacy; Volunteer Tutor Training; Newstart courses; Community, Aboriginal and special projects. |
| **Trish Branson** | Adult Literacy Program Co-ordinator, Curriculum writer and Project Officer, Marleston College of TAFE, SA. Trish's responsibility at the time of this project is developing a Staff Development program for adult literacy practitioners in South Australia. |
| **Rex Ennis** | Professional Development & Industry Liaison Officer with VALBEC, on secondment from the Workplace Basic Education Department of the Council of Adult Education. Rex has had considerable experience as a tutor in Workplace Basic Education classes; responsibility for curriculum development and tutor development. |
| **Daryl Evans** | ABE manager and teacher at Footscray College of TAFE, Victoria. Daryl has been involved in tutor training, curriculum development and materials production. |
| **Jenny Farmer** | 1991 President, Queensland Council for Adult Literacy. Jenny has had extensive experience in training volunteer tutors in both city and country community groups, and has participated in many committees including the Review of Adult Literacy in Queensland, and she co-organised the 1988 ACAL Conference held in Brisbane. |
| **Helen Kebby** | Head Teacher, Adult Basic Education, Bankstown College of TAFE, New South Wales. Helen has had wide-ranging classroom and management experience in Adult Literacy, has been the New South Wales representative on ACAL, was an organiser of the 1992 ACAL Conference in Sydney, and chaired the National TAFE Project on Staff Development. |
| **Sheilagh Kelly** | Lecturer, Graduate Diploma in Adult Education (Basic Education), University of Technology, Sydney. Sheilagh has extensive experience in training teachers for adult literacy and basic education. |
| **Sandra Kessler** | Adult Literacy Officer, Lismore College of TAFE, NSW, previously with the Adult Literacy Information Office and the Division of Adult Basic Education, TAFE. Sandra's experience covers teaching at many levels and involvement in research projects related to literacy issues in AMES, TAFE and the workplace. |

Note:
The positions held by the workshop participants were relevant at the time of their involvement in this project.

## Appendix C

**Critical Incident Interview Questions**

NAME:
CURRENT POSITION / TITLE:
INSTITUTION / ORGANISATION:

INTERVIEW: A significant incident

For the purposes of validating the work done so far to describe a competent ABE teacher, I will be asking you to recall a recent incident which highlights an aspect of significance, either from your own experience or from your observation of another ABE teacher.

The incident is "significant":

* where the teacher's action really made a difference in learner outcome, either directly or indirectly;
* an incident that went unusually well;
* an incident that did not go as planned;
* an incident that is very ordinary and typical;
* an incident that you think captures the quintessence of what ABE teaching is all about;
* an incident that was particularly demanding or satisfying.

The details I will need are:

1. Context: where.....when.....duration.....who: description of the class/group/individual .....
2. The teacher - title / position at the time of the incident.....
3. Please include in your incident description, the details of what happened and WHY it was significant to you. ( I will make notes from your retelling.)
4. Include your thoughts and feelings at the time, both during and after the incident.....
5. What, if anything, did you find demanding about the incident?.....
6. What, if anything, did you find particularly satisfying about the incident? .....
7. Describe a typical day at work .....
8. Describe an unusual day at work.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION !

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Adapted from Benner, P. (1984) *From Novice to Expert: Excellence & Power in Clinical Nursing Practice.* Addison-Wesley: California pp. 300-302

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## Appendix D

**Critical Incident Interview Data**

**Context: teaching a group in industry. Group: 4 male, 4 female; 20-50 years; 50% NESB. A company which builds vehicle components: 500-600 employees. Purpose: general literacy skills**

I had been teaching the class for approximately twenty weeks: the personnel manager and union were supportive so we extended beyond the twenty weeks. By this time the students had developed group skills and had an identity as a group. I had worked hard to integrate the NESB/ESB students to support each other in learning. When negotiating they had the opportunity to direct the whole thing and I was a facilitator. We drew up a list of activities; one was a survey of the workforce on a number of contentious issues in the company (eg no smoking, wearing of safety gloves). They brainstormed and decided to do the survey and write a report—they thought it would take several weeks, I thought it would take longer. The students were keen and optimistic and I intervened as little as possible. They worked in groups or pairs and nominated the issue to survey. Some had limited skills and some had pronunciation problems. Some lacked confidence though they had considerable literacy and learning skills. The pairing was complementary, there was peer support. I helped with the research skills, how to analyse, how to overcome difficulties; sometimes we talked together as a group and I encouraged reflection. What emerged was an in-depth research project. I gave workshops on note-making to help those who needed it. We role-played the oral interviews. This helped in setting them up for success, in knowing what to expect. I also had to sell it to the supervisors and manager who worried about taking the workers off the line. One particular area the students wanted to ask about—stress—made the manager upset as he felt that they would all say they were stressed and want time off. I emphasised that it was the skills not the content that they were researching; that they were learning as a team. Eventually management agreed although they were cautious about the issues : smoking was an emotive issue. I felt very challenged. When they were ready, the students did the survey and they were 'buzzing' about it at the debriefing. One student who had few skills in reading had mastered the questions that she had devised and read the questions to the manager; this was great PR as he was very impressed. The next question was what to do with the data. We analysed it, looked at other workplace reports, decided to use graphs. Numeracy skills were practised, students conferenced and wrote the report, typed it into booklet form and presented it to the managers who were very impressed, and the students were absolutely thrilled. This was literacy beyond the narrow definitions; responding to individual's needs as critical thinkers, sorting out a process, negotiating, working together, using social skills. All this is an important part of what I do. Supervisors often notice a difference in the workers; they show initiative, try to find solutions instead of just asking for help—these are the spin-offs for the company.

**Critical Incident Interview Data**

**Context: 1:1 Tutoring in sheltered workshop; 45 min–1 hour sessions in the 'literacy corner'**

When I first started tutoring, student J with a mild intellectual disability was newly married. She couldn't cook and was very nervous about grocery shopping. She had a real fear of getting to the supermarket checkout with too many groceries and not enough money. After several sessions, I realised that the ordinary numeracy activities in the program were not giving her what she needed fast enough. It was a desperate situation for J; she was struggling through the activities and had real numeracy problems, although her literacy was not too bad. She was getting increasingly tense about the weekly shopping. I made the decision to take a risk and introduce her to the calculator. We abandoned the basic numeracy program and I took her shopping with me. It was very demanding as she showed great indecisiveness about what she would buy, but I took her through it step by step. We worked out the cost of what she wanted on the calculator, then checked her money to see if she had enough. We did this several times and finally I sent her shopping by herself. She has never looked back; she came out smiling. The effect was tremendous; she had mastered the calculator and her confidence was much improved. She now shops independently, and has developed a personal recipe book as part of her reading course, and incorporates the recipes into her cooking at home. We have taken the camera to the local shops and photographed the signs, so that she can learn to read them. She incorporates these words into a book about shopping, using a language experience approach. There was a real need to divert from the program to meet her immediate needs. The conventional approach would take too long in the face of J's increasing anxiety about shopping. The most demanding time for me was her terrible indecisiveness in selecting what she wanted in the supermarket. I felt really excited for her when she succeeded.

## Appendix E

**Observation/Interview Questions**

WHAT IS A COMPETENT ABE TEACHER PROJECT
UNIT 1: ADULT LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES AND PRACTICES

1.1 Tell me about the social context of your class or group
1.2 Tell me about the needs as you see them of the individual students in your class or group. What do you see are the needs of the group? Is there any difficulty in balancing the needs of an individual student and the needs of the group?
1.3 Do you discuss your choice of classroom practices with your students? Why/why not?
1.4 On what theories of language do you base your teaching?
1.5 On what theories of adult learning do you base your teaching?
1.6 How do these theories affect your teaching practice?
- do you consciously model adult learning behaviour?
- how do you incorporate students' experiences/interests?
- how do you encourage independence, self-direction?
- how is mutual respect fostered?
- how is critical thinking fostered?

1.7 Tell me about the variety of teaching strategies that you use.
1.8 In developing numeracy skills, what guides your approach—in terms of theories about learning and conceptual development, maths, language of maths?
1.9 What activities do you use that relate numeracy to life experiences?

UNIT 2: SELECTION AND PLACEMENT OF STUDENTS

2.1 Explain your approach in the interviewing and assessing of a student : -what principles underlie your approach?
-how do you determine a student's immediate needs?
-how do you determine a student's possible future needs?
2.2 What guides your understanding of student's cultural needs?
2.3 What assessment tools do you use in the initial interview?
2.4 How do you decide what assessment tools to use and when?
2.5 Do you devise assessment tools of your own?
- What are they?
- On what principles are they based?

2.6 Do you know about other local providers and agencies which offer other options for a student?
- What are they?
- What determines your decision about the placement of a student?

2.7 What are the policies of your institution/organisation regarding the placing of students?
2.8 What are the relevant government policies regarding the placement of students?
2.9 If you consider that social factors have changed regarding a student's placement in a course, what do you do?
2.10 Have you ever had to challenge "the system" to meet a student's needs? Tell me about it. (reasons, outcomes)

2.11 Explain how you record interviews, outcomes and student progress to meet the requirements of your organisation/ government.

2.12 How do you satisfy the needs of student confidentiality while reporting as required to interested parties?

2.13 What determines your choice of record keeping methods?

UNIT 3: MANAGING LEARNING SITUATIONS.

OBSERVE :management of time (length of lesson, variety in activities, time allocation for tasks etc), space (seating, focus), use of resources (audio-visual, computer etc), what is used. Student interaction: (1:1, pairs, groups.). Student experiences drawn on, centring of lesson, change of direction/flexibility? Texts used, purposes for texts.

3.1 How do you decide what to include in a course for a particular student, or group of students?

3.2 How do you explain to your students your choice of course content?

3.3 What is your purpose in the short term for your group? In the long term?

3.4 Do you change the purpose of your lesson if something unexpected occurs? How do you decide when to vary the lesson and when to keep on the original track?

3.5 How much opportunity do you have to discuss your course with another teacher? Has such a discussion ever influenced your teaching significantly? Please describe how.

3.6 How important is the sharing of resources with other teachers?

UNIT 4: MONITORING LEARNING

4.1 What assessment tools do you use in monitoring student progress? Specify.

4.2 What determines your choice of assessment methods in monitoring student progress?

4.3 What effect does monitoring have on your decisions about the content/methods of a course?

4.4 How do you report on the results of your monitoring to the students themselves? To your supervisor, to the students' supervisor? (Are there differences where curriculum is wholly or partly externally set?)

4.5 Who has access to your records? How do you decide on what information about a student to make accessible?

4.6 Is it important that students are part of the progress-recording process? Give reasons for your view.

4.7 How important is your own reflection on your practice? What opportunities do you have for reflection? Do you use writing for reflection?

4.8 What opportunities do you have for consultation with others?

UNIT 5: EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS

5.1 How do you evaluate a course? (strategies: measures - formal, informal)

5.2 What determines your choice of an evaluation measure?

53 How is the evaluation used -for students?
- for peers?
- for management?
- for funding sources?

5.4 How does your evaluation relate to a student's articulation into further courses/training? Does it involve a contribution from the student ? How?

5.5 How does your evaluation
- relate to the stated policies, aims and objectives of your organisation ?
- provide financial accountability ?
- relate to ongoing course and program development?

UNIT 6: COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION AND CONSULATION

6.1 List organisations that are relevant to ABE provision.

6.2 Tell me about any contact you have had with them: your purpose, outcomes.

6.3 Describe your network within ABE: what is your role in this network?

6.4 Have you promoted an awareness of your course, college etc recently? Describe how.

6.5 Have you recently represented ABE by participating in: staff meetings, committees, preparing submissions/budgets for ABE programs etc?

6.6 Have you recently had a role in seeking funding for ABE programs? How did you go about it ?

6.7 Are you ever asked to speak on behalf of ABE? to whom? for what purpose?

UNIT 7: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

7.1 How do you keep informed about current developments and issues in the field of ABE (theory and practice) and in the context of where you teach? (workplace etc)

7.2 List your membership of any relevant professional organisations, and/or professional publications that you read.

7.3 Have you contributed to any professional publication recently?

7.4 Have you recently attended a professional conference, workshop etc?

7.5 Have you given any presentations at these recently?

7.6 Tell me about something that you have recently introduced in your teaching. Where did you learn about it? How do you monitor its effect?

## Appendix F
### Observation/Interview Data

**Context: a literacy/numeracy class mixed levels (beginning—developing) TAFE College Setting: an old cottage, the classroom is a large central room. Noise in adjacent rooms, people passing through at first. The students sit around a large table facing the teacher at one end with the whiteboard. A computer in each of two corners. Bookshelves, posters, friendly atmosphere among teachers and students. Group: 9 students, some intellectually disabled, others with little previous education, 2 NESB, 6 men, 3 women; ages late teens to late 40s.**
**An extract from a full day session**

The teacher has prepared a list of the day's activities on the board. It is informal with students joking as they settle. Fairly formal introdution to dictation—then the teacher moves around, checking. Students volunteer to write the sentences on the board, folowed by class discussion of them and the correction of any mistakes. The teacher gives explanations (eg base words, 'tion' endings, how to remember there/where/here). Some students discuss their difficulties with spelling. The teacher suggests the look/cover/write/check method, also gives simple strategies for remembering. The teacher lets the discussion range as one outspoken student (J) interrupts with a story. She likes to hold the floor—the teacher is patient with her and throughout the session just reminds her gently to let others answer and have a turn. The teacher asks if any student wants to ask about a word. A student queries the difference between *right* and *write* - the teacher has a box on the board of things to do next time. J mentions 'curfew'; the teacher asks where she heard the word and the class discusses the Los Angeles riots currently in the news. The teacher doesn't correct misinformation, just asks for more information to clarify. The teacher uses syllabification to help with words, or the sounds. She suggests the dictionary. Dictionaries are in the middle of the table; a student uses one. The teacher praises students' efforts to give sentences using the words, she encourages the reluctant student to try and is non-threatening. The teacher checks the homework and understands when some have reasons for not doing it. A heated discussion develops about the passage on mosquitoes for homework regarding AIDS. The teacher keeps order and is impartial despite the strong feelings expressed; she suggests students do some research to find the answers to their disagreement—one student will bring in evidence. Despite the vocal J, the teacher encourages another student to read his homework, which is a task he set himself out of interest. The teacher praises his work which is quite lengthy: praising specific features such as the number of facts and the paragraphing. She will photocopy it for his file and he is pleased. Another student with a speech impediment is encouraged to read his story—other students are supportive—while the teacher stands by and helps him to keep the place. He is finger-following as he reads slowly word by word. She suggests using a map to look up the location of his piece. She asks questions at both a literal and inferential level and paraphrases his story for the class. There is sincere praise for his effort. The teacher deflects J's story until later. The teacher then checks maths homework on the board and a student is asked to show his work on the board. The teacher moves around individuals—did you get it right? are you pleased? The teacher wants to see the working—no pressure—tells an anxious student not to worry. The teacher surveys the group and can see that some are tiring so calls for the break. The students have coffee together and socialise.

**Observation/Interview Data**

**Context: Maths Workshop (beginning level) TAFE College Setting: large crowded room, shared with another group, divided by screens - some noise and distraction. Posters, photos, bookshelves. The students sit around a table facing the teacher at one end with the whiteboard. Group: 2 men, NESB and ESB, 3 women NESB; ages 20s - 40s. The teacher is a trained ABE teacher, who is actively involved in professional development. An extract from a 3 hour session**

Introduction: Informal talk while students settle. Teacher explains the game with stickers; pick a number and write it on the sticker and stick to one student's forehead. This student then asks questions of the others to find out what is the number. The questions involve maths terms eg "digits, tens" The teacher scribes information onto the whiteboard. There is good-humour throughout the game. Students practice maths language and also closed questions; they may only answer yes or no. The teacher picks up on confusion about "odds and evens", and revises the concept with examples. There is a friendly atmosphere, the teacher is one of the group. When students show a lack of understanding of a term the teacher enlarges and discusses it (eg "more than", "between"). There is an emphasis on language learning: why do you speak when someone looks at you? What other questions could we ask? Students prompt each other and the teacher encourages turn-taking, and checks back with the group after each explanation. She indicates that it helps to scribble notes in order to remember, just as she is doing on the board. Students have a choice whether they will play the game;: they all join in. When the game slows down the teacher joins in with prompts and draws students' attention to the questions that help narrow the field of possible numbers. She has been scribing these on the board and the group tries some of the questions. They discuss why they are having difficulty guessing a number; the word "between" and the concept of "gets bigger" have been confusing some. She explains the cultural differences in maths that result in different understandings and different words for the concept. The teacher makes notes on student progress throughout the lesson. The teacher suggests that they move onto another activity and gives out student folders. Individual tasks are allocated and individual conferencing to explain the tasks follows. Two students work together in their own language with a calculator. One student works with boxes and bottles to discover the capacity of each; the teacher works 1:1 with her—how to measure liquids, solids—explains terms "grams, millilitres". As she is teaching this student the teacher monitors the others and assists by getting equipment needed by one. The teacher demonstrates, explains and uses question and answer to help this student understand the problems. Students are at different levels. One is working with a problem that needs a pack of cards and the teacher gets them. The task calls on the student's knowledge of card games and when he makes a mistake the teacher tells him not to worry, just cross it out. The teacher asks questions that help the student work out the answer: "what would you do? does that look right to you? are you answering the question?" She consolidates student successes with praise and by paraphrasing what he did. She explains the language "suit" in cards—on the board demonstrates with pictures and words the names of the suits. This clarifies the problem and involves other students in a discussion of the worth of each suit; the teacher admits to not knowing.

The teacher moves to the pair of students working together and they explain their difficulties with their problem, involving calculating interest payments on loans. The teacher clarifies the language: the loan taken out "over" 6 months; "reducible". Through question and answer the students reason out the problem. The teacher tells them to talk as they work it out, and she encourages estimation. She helps one student with operating the calculator and gets her to practise the operation several times with examples. One of the students is fairly bossy and the teacher asks her to let the other student work it out. The teacher takes this quieter student through the problem step by step with questions. She is very patient and encourages her to use the information she already has to estimate.

**Observation/Interview Data**

**Context: a literacy/numeracy class for unemployed men in a Neighbourhood House.**
**Setting: an old house whose rooms have become classrooms. It functions as a neighbourhood drop-in centre, serves lunch, runs courses for women. It has a fairly run-down appearance but has been brightened up with posters, pictures. The teacher co-ordinates the above activities as well as 6 volunteers, and teaches. The House is run by a management committee to whom the teacher has to report.**
**Group: 9 students, male, unemployed, mixed age range, mostly young. CES referrals.**
**An extract from a full day session**

The students first congregate in the kitchen where the teacher is preparing lunch; they get coffee and move to the classroom, which is a long room/verandah, with students around a long table facing the teacher and board. Occasionally a student will leave the table to stand at the door to smoke. The teacher takes firm control at the beginning of the lesson, outlining what will be done during the morning. There is however a friendly and informal atmosphere. The teacher revises work on graphs from the previous lesson—question and answer. She uses the board to demonstrate. This session is concerned with teaching relevant reading and numeracy strategies in order to understand the local council's Annual Report. Each student is given enlarged photocopies of the Report, containing a lot of graphs and statistics. The teacher discusses what these represent by eliciting and questioning.

She keeps checking through questions to ensure comprehension. The questions are related back to the real issues of the accountability of the Council to explain its workings to the rate-payers. The teacher asks: "Is the information clear? Could you complain? How? What sort of letter?" From the discussion a series of activities are written on the board, and the teacher indicates that these will be followed-up later. She reassures by adding that the tasks will be done together. The aim is to compile the tasks into a booklet for another class; it will have the students' names on it as a group product.

The teacher leads the group through an analysis of information in several paragraphs; she reads aloud and asks questions. Humour is used to keep a boisterous student in place. Students are encouraged to guess from the statistical data. Attention is drawn to the spelling of particular words. The teacher puts them on the board, encourages prediction: eg. "How do you spell 'statistics': How can we work it out? If I rubbed it off, could you spell it now?" Students can. Another exercise requires names of countries, and the teacher draws attention to capital letters. All the time she is asking how much information is there in the graphs, is it enough ? What can we do to get the full picture (eg of nationalities in the municipality)? Who could we ring? Who could we write to? She asks questions for students to use their own experiences - how do people get this sort of information? (Some remember the census).The teacher gets out large world map to help students decide where some countries are. Students have poor geographical knowledge. The teacher refers to her own country of origin, turns it into a game to find countries that students have connections with. She uses geographical terms and asks for explanation of them ('hemisphere', 'equator'). It is a very interactive atmosphere for most students; one or two require constant effort by the teacher to keep them on task. She ignores the student who is showing off and he stops. Butchers' paper is handed out for the tasks related to interpreting the demographic information. The teacher scribes the information as students interpret it: "I'll do the writing, you explain it in your own words. It's got to be in easy language for other classes to understand. What's another word

for reside?—live". The teacher justifies the task to a student. She has focused all attention on the writing task, emphasising drafting, changing words at their suggestion, asking the purpose of sentences, clarifying; jointly constructing a text. After the break, students work in groups translating the graphs and statistics into sentences. The teacher suggests getting it typed, emphasising the need for it to be clear for the audience. Some students are self-starting, two others want to use the computer in another room for games. The teacher is firm and insists that they use it for the work in hand. These students have been very demanding all morning but the teacher retains humour and control. She encourages the willing students with questions to draw out inferences and conclusions from the graphs, and reassures one tentative student that she will help with the spelling at the next stage when the information is down, before they make it into a booklet. She prompts divergent thinking with leading questions and draws on their own experience. She encourages them to challenge the information they have been provided with and to ask questions, eg check with the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The teacher moves to another group and helps with proofing, and also checks in the computer area. She does not spend much time with the reluctant students who are determined to play computer games. She sits with the quieter student and draws him into the activity of the group. Group work continues until lunch. Each group has a lot of information on the butchers' paper and is beginning to write it up in an organised way.

## Appendix G

### Acronyms

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| ABE | Adult Basic Education |
| ACAL | Australian Council for Adult Literacy |
| ALBE | Adult Literacy and Basic Education |
| ALBSU | Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (UK) |
| ALIO | Adult Literacy Information Office (Sydney) |
| ATF | Australian Teachers' Federation |
| CABE | Certificate in Adult Basic Education (TAFE NSW) |
| CAE | Council of Adult Education (Victoria) |
| CATALPA | Co-ordinating Agency for Training Adult Literacy Personnel in Australia |
| CES | Commonwealth Employment Service |
| DEET | Department of Employment, Education and Training |
| DEIRT | Department of Employment, Industrial Relations and Training |
| DETAFE | Department of Employment and Technical and Further Education |
| DFE | Department of Further Education (Victoria) |
| ESB | English Speaking Background |
| ESL | English as a Second Language |
| ESOL | English to Speakers of Other Languages |
| HRD | Human Resource Development |
| ILY | International Literacy Year |
| IWG | Implementation Working Group, ILY |
| NESB | Non-English Speaking Background |
| NCELTR | National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research (Macquarie University, Sydney) |
| NTB | National Training Board |
| QCAL | Queensland Council for Adult Literacy |
| RAWFA | Reading and Writing for Adults (TAFE NSW) |
| SIP | Special Intervention Program (Commonwealth Newstart) |
| TAFE | Technical and Further Education |
| UTS | University of Technology, Sydney |
| VALBEC | Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council |

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